

1999

## Wild Yankees: Settlement, conflict, and localism along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier, 1760-1820

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WILD YANKEES:  
SETTLEMENT, CONFLICT, & LOCALISM ALONG PENNSYLVANIA'S  
NORTHEAST FRONTIER, 1760-1820

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A Dissertation

Presented to  
The Faculty of the Department of History  
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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by  
Paul Benjamin Moyer

1999



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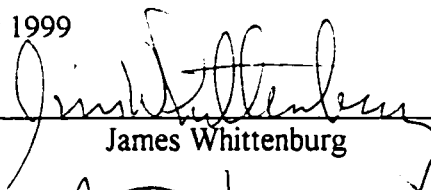
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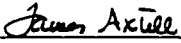
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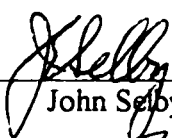
  
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**This work is dedicated  
to the memory of my grandfather,  
Paul Jacob Potteiger**

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A number of people accompanied me on my journey into the early American backcountry. Some only traveled with me for a short stint, others stuck by me for the long haul. My companions made every attempt to show me a clear path and gently nudged me back on course when I lost my way. But no matter how great or small their contribution, I gratefully extend my appreciation to all those who helped me to complete this dissertation.

First and foremost I would like to thank James Whittenburg, not only for his efforts as my dissertation director, but also for the support and guidance he has offered me throughout my graduate career. The other members of my dissertation committee also deserve recognition. Leisa Meyer's insightful comments helped me to develop and effectively express my ideas. Likewise, Alan Taylor advanced my work by making available to me his own considerable knowledge of the revolutionary frontier. Indeed, Alan Taylor's book, *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors*, was in many ways the inspiration for my own explorations into the backcountry. Moreover, the comments of James Axtell and John Selby were a great help to me in the final stages of the writing process. Finally, I would like to thank Carol Sheriff for encouraging me to pursue this topic when my dissertation was in its youth as a research project for her seminar on American history.

While researching my dissertation I benefited from the knowledge and generosity of a number of archivists and librarians. The staff of the Earl Gregg Swem Library, especially the interlibrary loan department, facilitated my search for sources relative to Pennsylvania's northeast frontier. Likewise, the staff of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, and the Tioga Point Museum were attentive to my queries concerning their collections and greatly expedited my research. I would also like to thank the Historical Society of Connecticut and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission for making microfilm copies of their collections available to me. Finally, much of the research I conducted would not have been possible without the financial support I received from the College of William and Mary.

I also owe a word of thanks to friends and family. I could not have come this far in my education without my parents' unfailing encouragement. Their support has been, and continues to be, a source of strength. Carrie Ablinger deserves recognition for the technical assistance she offered me in creating the maps that accompany this project and in printing out the final copies of my dissertation. Finally, I owe an unpayable debt to my wife, Christine. Her faith in me and her willingness to share the first years of our marriage with my dissertation enabled me to make this work what it is.

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## ABSTRACT

Pennsylvania's northeast frontier--a region embraced by the upper reaches of the Delaware and Susquehanna Rivers--was the scene of a bitter and, at times, bloody backwoods dispute. Here Yankees (settlers and speculators holding deeds from Connecticut land companies) fought Pennamites (settlers and landlords who claimed land under Pennsylvania) for land and authority. This contest began in the 1760s and lasted till the first decades of the nineteenth century and, for a time, pitted Connecticut against Pennsylvania in a bitter jurisdictional conflict. This study focuses on the dispute after the revolutionary war when the federal government awarded the contested territory to Pennsylvania and when Connecticut claimants, who became known as Wild Yankees, violently resisted the imposition of Pennsylvania's authority and soil rights.

Northeast Pennsylvania's frontier disturbances were not unique but formed part of a much broader wave of agrarian unrest. From Maine to the Carolinas, America's revolutionary frontier was the scene of a struggle over property and power fought between Indians, settlers, land speculators, and government authorities. Historians who examine contention between the latter three groups have argued that competing interpretations of the Revolution, competition over land, class tensions, and deeper cultural struggles between backcountry and frontcountry shaped frontier discord.

This study explores agrarian unrest in northeast Pennsylvania and adds to existing backcountry scholarship by demonstrating that the revolutionary frontier was not only the scene of a battle over land and authority but also the locus of a struggle over identity and the definition of local culture. It analyzes how frontier expansion, the Revolution, class conflict, and disputes over property intersected with the daily lives of ordinary men and women by examining the small-scale social networks (family, kin, and neighborhood) that delimited their lives.

This study makes two closely connected arguments. First, it contends that backcountry inhabitants' local lives--the social relationships, economic networks, and sources of authority that operated on a face-to-face level--framed their aspirations as well as their perceptions of the Revolution and social conflict. This parochial world view, or *localism*, played an important role in shaping frontier expansion and frontier unrest. Second, it argues that localism, though it had always been present in agrarian society, became a paramount ingredient of identity and ideology in the backcountry between the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Rapid frontier expansion combined with the Revolution to create a distinct parochial world view among settlers that can best be described as *revolutionary backcountry localism*.



**WILD YANKEES:  
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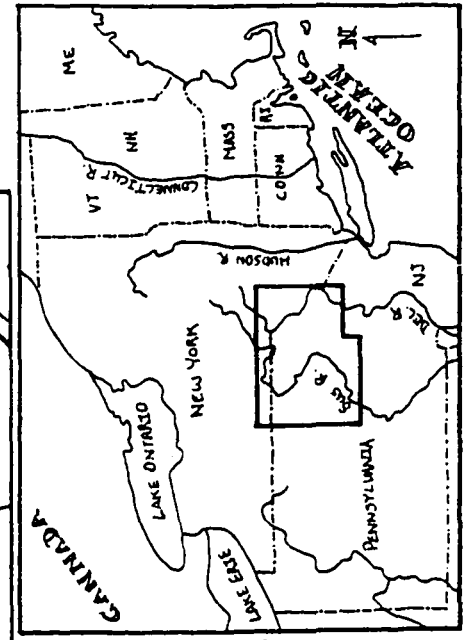
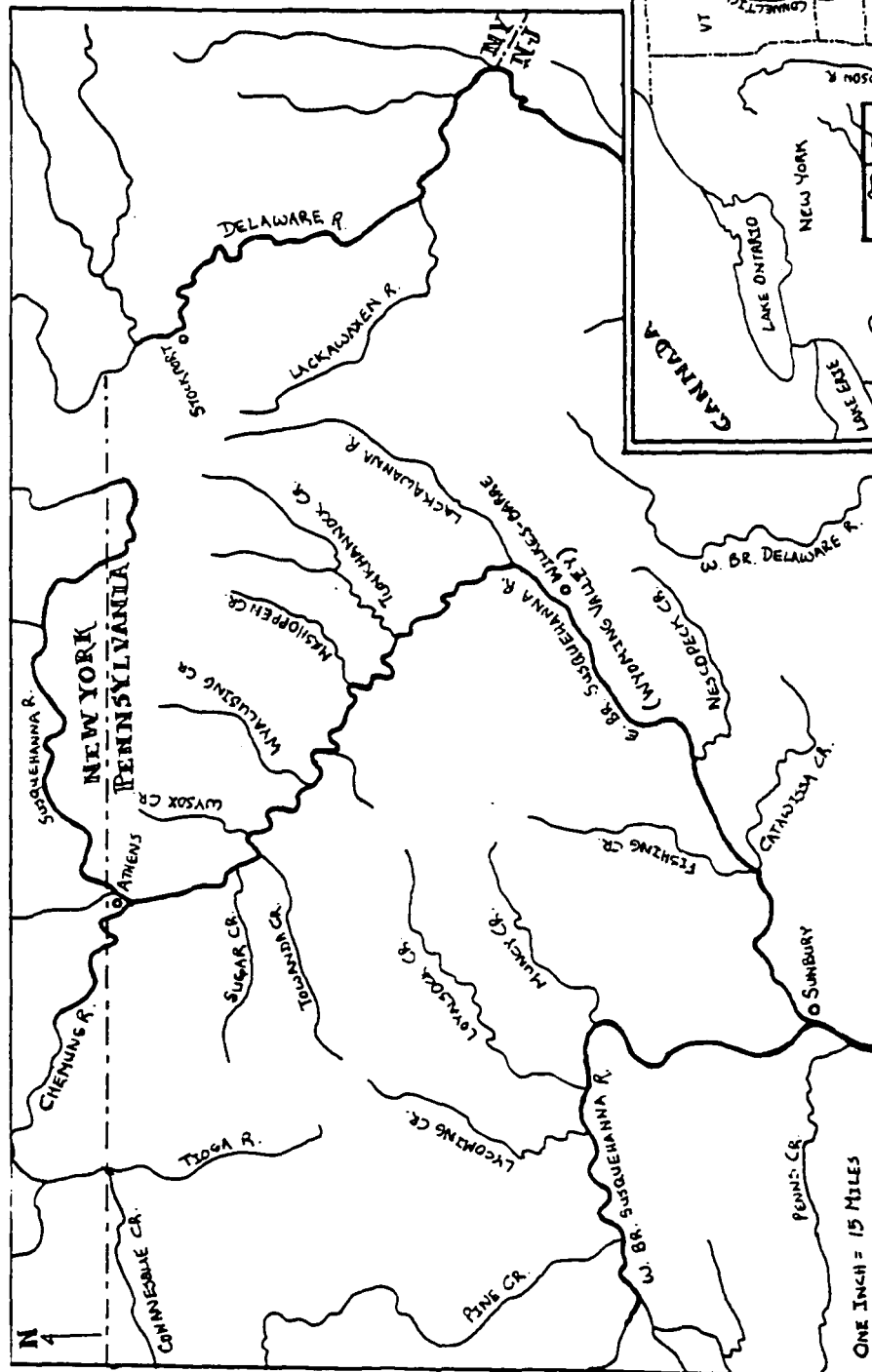
## INTRODUCTION

*I must now away up this long river, sixty miles higher,  
among quarrelsome Yankees, insidious Indians, and, at  
best, lonely wilds.*--Rev. Philip Vicars Fithian, 1775<sup>1</sup>

Between 1760 and 1820--a territory embraced by the upper reaches of the Delaware and Susquehanna Rivers--was the scene of a contentious backwoods dispute over property and power. Connecticut's land-hungry inhabitants initiated the conflict in 1753 when they resurrected extensive territorial claims contained in their colony's seventeenth-century charter, formed settlement companies that purchased lands in Pennsylvania from Indians, and embarked upon a program of western expansion. Pennsylvania resisted this encroachment on its lands by arresting New Englanders who illegally settled in the colony and by appealing to imperial officials to halt Connecticut's bid for western expansion. The arrival of large numbers of New Englanders along the Pennsylvania frontier in 1769 set off a second, more violent, phase of the struggle as Yankees (settlers who claimed land under Connecticut land companies) and Pennamites (those who took up lands under Pennsylvania) engaged in armed conflict. Connecticut's annexation of the region in 1774 only heightened tensions. The third and final phase of the conflict began late in 1782 when a federal court awarded control of the contested region to Pennsylvania. This event transformed the dispute from a jurisdictional confrontation between states into a struggle between contending factions of settlers and land developers.

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<sup>1</sup> Extracts from the Diary of the Rev. Philip Vicars Fithian, July 20, 1775, Robert J. Taylor, ed., *The Susquehannah Company Papers*, 11 vols. (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1968), 6:329.



## PENNSYLVANIA'S NORTHEAST FRONTIER

My dissertation focuses on the final decades of unrest along the northeast frontier. Between 1783 and the early 1800s, Yankee settlers fought to maintain their autonomy from Pennsylvania's state government and to defend their property from Pennsylvania land claimants. The most rebellious New Englanders became "Wild Yankees": backcountry vigilantes who bullied Pennsylvania's surveyors, harassed its land claimants, and intimidated its officials. Pennsylvania's Wild Yankees participated in a much larger pattern of agrarian unrest in the decades leading up to and following the Revolution. Like Vermont's Green Mountain Boys, North Carolina's Regulators, Massachusetts' Shaysites, western Pennsylvania's Whiskey Rebels, and Maine's Liberty Men, Wild Yankees fought for land, justice, and independence.<sup>2</sup>

This project builds upon the work of historians who have studied America's agrarian disturbances and the settlement of its revolutionary frontier. Existing scholarship examines

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<sup>2</sup> Leading works on agrarian unrest and the settlement of American's revolutionary frontier include Michael A. Bellesiles, *Revolutionary Outlaws: Ethan Allen and the Struggle for Independence on the Early American Frontier* (Charlottesville: Univ. of Virginia Press, 1993); Dorothy E. Fennell, "From Rebelliousness to Insurrection: A Social History of the Whiskey Rebellion, 1765-1802" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Pittsburgh, 1981); Barbara Karsky, "Agrarian Radicalism in the Late Revolutionary Period, 1780-1795," in Erich Angermann et al., eds., *New Wine in Old Skins: A Comparative View of Socio-Political Structures and Values Affecting the American Revolution* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1976), 87-114; Brenden J. McConville, *These Daring Disturbers of the Public Peace: The Struggle for Property and Power in Early New Jersey* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1999); David P. Szatmary, *Shay's Rebellion: The Making of an Agrarian Insurrection* (Amherst: The Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1986); Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986); Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement of the Maine Frontier, 1760-1820* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1990); Alan Taylor, "Agrarian Independence: Northern Land Rioters After the Revolution," in Alfred F. Young, ed., *Beyond the American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Univ. Press, 1993), 221-45; and James P. Whittenburg, "Planters, Merchants, and Lawyers: Social Change and the Origins of the North Carolina Regulation," *William & Mary Quarterly* 34 (April 1977): 215-238 (hereafter cited as *WMQ*).

how the Revolution, settlers' and land speculators' competing definitions of property, and the realities of backcountry life fueled unrest along the frontier. These studies also reveal how contention over property and authority reflect deeper cultural struggles between backcountry and frontcountry, between wealthy gentlemen and poor farmers, as well as between orthodox and evangelical religion.<sup>3</sup> A debate runs through much of this scholarship; namely, can agrarian discord in early America be characterized as class conflict? Many historians who have examined backcountry revolts either stress that rural rebels were petty capitalists struggling over land and resources or argue that they were a rural proletariat fighting against landlords, merchants, and other harbingers of a commercial social order. However, more recently, a few scholars have blazed a useful path between these arguments by demonstrating that agrarian insurgents could be both acquisitive farmers as well as backwoods rebels who possessed a keen awareness of social inequalities and class conflict. My own viewpoints on agrarian unrest parallel this perspective.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Edward Countryman, "Out of the Bounds of the Law': Northern Land Rioters in the Eighteenth Century," in Alfred F. Young, ed., *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Univ. Press, 1976), 37-70; Szatmary, *Shays' Rebellion*; Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion*; Taylor, *Liberty Men*, especially chapters 3, 5, 7; Alan Taylor, "'Stopping the Progress of Rogues and Deceivers': A White Indian Recruiting Notice of 1808," *WMQ* 42 (January 1985): 90-103; Alan Taylor, "Nathan Barlow's Journey: Mysticism and Popular Protest on the Northeastern Frontier," in Charles E. Clark, James S. Leamon, and Karen Bowden, eds., *Maine in the Early Republic* (Hanover, NH: Univ. Press of New England, 1988), 100-117; and Whittenburg, "Planters, Merchants, and Lawyers."

<sup>4</sup> The first view is exemplified in Sung Bok Kim, *Landlords and Tenant in Colonial New York: Manorial Society, 1664-1775* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1978). The "agrarian radical" argument has been made by Szatmary, *Shays' Rebellion*; Countryman, "Out of the Bounds of the Law"; and most forcibly in Marvin L. Michael Kay, "The North Carolina Regulation, 1766-1776: A Class Conflict," in Alfred F. Young, ed., *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Univ. Press, 1976), 71-123. A third argument that synthesizes these two points of view is featured in Allan Kulikoff's, *The Agrarian Origins of Capitalism* (Charlottesville, Va.: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1992), 2-3; and in Taylor,

This study complements existing scholarship by exploring America's revolutionary settlement from the point of view of the settlers themselves. I seek to understand how frontier expansion, the Revolution, class conflict, and disputes over property and authority intersected with the daily lives of ordinary men and women. I focus on the attitudes, values, and experiences of ordinary backcountry inhabitants; moreover, I examine the small-scale social networks (family, kin, and neighborhood) that delimited their lives. Exploring the face-to-face relationships that dominated everyday life in the backcountry, as well as the interplay between this local culture and discourses that extended beyond the bounds of individual backwoods neighborhoods, leads to a host of new insights about the early American frontier. I am not the only person to come to this conclusion. Recently, historians of the early American frontier have been paying more attention to settlers' localist perspectives. They have discovered that backcountry settlers' perceptions of the Revolution, as well as of time and space itself, were shaped by an intensely parochial world view.<sup>5</sup>

This examination of settlement and agrarian unrest in northeast Pennsylvania makes two arguments. First, I contend that backcountry inhabitants' local lives--the social relationships, economic networks, and sources of authority that operated on a face-to-face level--framed their aspirations as well as their perceptions of the Revolution and social

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*Liberty Men*, 6-9.

<sup>5</sup> Scholars who have explored backcountry localism include Albert H. Tillson, Jr., "The Localist Roots of Backcountry Loyalism: An Examination of Popular Political Culture in Virginia's New River Valley," *Journal of Southern History* 54 (August 1988): 387-404; Elizabeth A. Perkins, *Border Life: Experience and Memory in the Revolutionary Ohio Valley* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1998); Charles D. Dutrizac, "Local Identity and Authority in a Disputed Hinterland: The Pennsylvania-Maryland Border in the 1730s," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History & Biography* 115 (January 1991), 35-61; and Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), xiv. White's concept of "village politics" parallels my own thoughts on the importance of localism in the backcountry.

conflict. This parochialism, or *localism*, should be seen not just as a lack of perspective but as a distinctly pre-modern world view--as a method of understanding that interprets events through local experience. The concept of localism possesses an explanatory power that scholars of the American frontier often ascribe to constructs of class, ethnicity, and gender. Thus, in addition to rich versus poor, masculine versus feminine, or Indian versus settler, the backcountry needs to be viewed in the light of the relationship between insiders and outsiders. My study of conflict and settlement along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier aims to contribute to such an interpretation. Rather than portraying local culture as a byproduct of frontier expansion and agrarian discord, I place it at center stage of this exploration of the early American backcountry.

My second argument grows out of my first. I contend that, though localism had always been present in agrarian America, it became a paramount ingredient of identity and ideology along the frontier between the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Two events promoted this development. First, starting in the middle of the eighteenth century and reaching its peak in the decades following the revolutionary war, a wave of frontier migration thrust settlers deep into America's hinterlands. Indeed, more land was occupied by Anglo-Americans between 1790 and 1820 than had been settled in the previous two centuries of colonization. This unprecedented surge of expansion carried many migrants into raw backwoods regions far beyond the effective reach of established authority. In this environment of isolation and de facto autonomy, settlers fashioned distinct local cultures. Second, the American Revolution shattered imperial power and put the legitimacy of many provincial governments in doubt; moreover, the colonies' revolutionary government failed to fill this power vacuum. The disruption of authority was particularly pronounced in frontier regions that had lacked institutions of authority before the Revolution. Lacking any strong, centralized government, backcountry inhabitants fell back on their own resources and established their own locally-supported structures of authority. Besides

undermining centralized authority along the frontier, the Revolution also legitimized the drive for independence and encouraged settlers to identify their own struggles for local autonomy with America's fight against Britain.

Rapid frontier expansion combined with the Revolution to create a distinct parochial world view among settlers that can best be described as localism or, better yet, as *revolutionary backcountry localism*. Indeed, the rebellions and disturbances that plagued America's hinterlands between the 1760s and the 1820s can be seen as the most striking expression of this intense localism. Issues concerning land and authority sparked settler unrest along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier; however, on a deeper level, localism was at work shaping backcountry inhabitants' attitudes and behavior. Likewise, the decline of frontier unrest in the early nineteenth century reflected the decline of revolutionary backcountry localism. By the 1800s the Revolution had become institutionalized and government had established its presence along frontier, thus reducing settlers' opportunity to create their own local structures of authority and undermining the legitimacy of such acts. Moreover, the nature of frontier expansion had changed. Increasingly, the frontier lost its identity as a place of open land, yeoman independence, and local autonomy as land developers, government officials, and commercial forces increasingly determined the tone and tempo of settlement.

Before going any farther, a word needs to be said about the interpretation of localism and how this interpretation frames this analysis of local culture along the early American frontier.<sup>6</sup> Localism is both a set of relationships as well as an ethos or world view. The former aspect of localism gave it structure, the latter gave it meaning, and both can provide valuable insights into the nature of America's revolutionary frontier. The structure

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<sup>6</sup> One work that explores local culture in early America and that was critical to the development of my own conceptualization of localism is Darrett B. Rutman, "Assessing the Little Communities of Early America" *WMQ* 43 (April 1986): 163-178.



of localism was rooted in the face-to-face contacts that shaped daily life as well as the institutions that mediated these contacts: households, kin networks, and neighborhoods. Thus, these interpersonal contacts and small-scale social institutions that they revolved around are central features of my exploration into localism. Equally important, this study examines the attitudes, values, and ideologies that shaped and, in turn, were shaped by backcountry localism. Central to this examination of localism as a world view is an understanding of how the American Revolution, frontier farmers' notions of independence, and constructs of identity (including class consciousness) came into dialogue with local culture.

This, then, is a story of how daily life, settlement, and conflict intertwined along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier. It is also a story about the nature of the early American frontier and, more specifically, about the rise and decline of revolutionary backcountry localism. Chapter 1 describes the origins of unrest in northeast Pennsylvania, outlines the dispute through the revolutionary war, and explores the conditions that fostered frontier localism.

Chapters 2 through 7--the core of my analysis--examine settlement, agrarian unrest, and local culture along the northeast frontier between the end of the revolutionary war and the first decade of the nineteenth century. Both chapters 2 and 3 focus on the small-scale social institutions that structured backcountry localism. Chapter 2 examines how the war and conflicts between households and neighborhoods over the means of subsistence shaped unrest in the Wyoming Valley in the years immediately following independence. It argues that discord between Yankees and Pennamites needs to be understood not as a conflict between state jurisdictions or regional cultures, but as a series of highly personalized feuds over land and resources. Chapter 3 traces the origins of Pennsylvania's Wild Yankees and reveals that neighborhood networks and household relationships (particularly relationships between yeoman fathers and their sons) served as a framework

for the recruitment and organization of insurgents. It also examines conflicts that emerged between Connecticut claimants and between the localist ethos of Yankee settlers and the agendas of outsiders who supported their fight against Pennsylvania.

Chapters 4 and 5 pick up the discussion of the relationship between localism and the larger forces shaping agrarian unrest along the northeast frontier. Chapter 4 examines the relationship between Pennsylvania's Wild Yankees and the agrarian disturbances--most notably Vermont's contentious bid for statehood and Shays' Rebellion--that shook the early republic. More specifically, the chapter explores the ties that existed between Yankee insurgents and land speculators in New York and New England who supported the Connecticut claim. The chapter contends that localism, rather than isolating settlers, placed them in dialogue with translocal forces of unrest and commercial development shaping the American backcountry. Chapter 5 continues this line of thought by paying close attention to how localism and frontier expansion set the tone and tempo of unrest in northeast Pennsylvania during the 1790s. Specifically, it examines how land speculation and frontier migration rejuvenated, and expanded, Yankee insurgency. This chapter argues that settlers and speculators, localism and commercialism, could, and did, find common ground along the northeast frontier.

Chapters 6 and 7 form another unit of analysis: they refocus the study on face-to-face relationships in their investigation of the final decade of agrarian insurgency in northeast Pennsylvania. Chapter 6 demonstrates how localism and settlers' face-to-face social networks continued to shape resistance into the nineteenth century, even as the state of Pennsylvania, its most powerful landholders, and dwindling outside support put Wild Yankees on the defensive. However, it concludes that localism ultimately failed as a framework for Yankee resistance. Chapter 7 examines why localism could no longer serve as a basis for agrarian insurgency after the turn of the century. It describes how Pennsylvania took the initiative in the fight for the northeast frontier and effectively

worked to divided Yankee dissidents. More important, it argues that prominent backcountry settlers became increasingly divorced from local culture after 1800 because of frontier economic development and the social stratification that attended it. Without settler unity and a common loyalty to local culture, Wild Yankees could not maintain opposition to the state.

Chapter 8 discusses the transformation of backcountry localism after the turn of the century. In particular, it focuses on how national politics, evangelical religion, and other translocal institutions and movements reshaped local culture along the northeast frontier. A brief epilogue charts the fate of revolutionary backcountry localism.

This study attempts to place at center stage a concept that, so far, has only made its way into the margins of early American history: localism. It argues that the social relationships and attitudes that constituted local culture are crucial to understanding the past. This look at agrarian insurgency along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier seeks to historicize the discourse of localism by placing it in a firm chronological and topical framework. Specifically, this study contends that between (roughly) 1760 and 1820 America witnessed the emergence of revolutionary backcountry localism. The goal of this analysis is not to close the book on the evolution of local culture along the revolutionary frontier, but to spark further debate over the nature of identity and the significance of localism in early America.

## CHAPTER I A CONTESTED HINTERLAND

*If Hell is justly considered as the rendivous of Rascals, we cannot entertain a Doubt of Wioming being the Place.*--William Maclay, April 2, 1773<sup>1</sup>

In the second half of the eighteenth century, Pennsylvania's northeast frontier became the intersection of three contests. First, it was the scene of a territorial and jurisdictional contest between Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and New England land companies. Second, it witnessed one of the many contests over land and local autonomy fought between backcountry settlers and government authorities in early America. Finally, the region was part of a larger revolutionary contest--an upheaval that featured America's drive for independence from Britain as well as frontier inhabitants' local struggles for power and self determination.

The life of the notorious backcountry outlaw, Lazarus Stewart, illustrates how these three contests combined to shape the northeast frontier in the decades leading up to the American Revolution. Stewart played a leading role in fermenting unrest along the Pennsylvania frontier; he also became involved in the dispute over land and authority in northeast Pennsylvania. Finally, he embraced America's revolutionary struggle and used the colonies' bid for independence to further the frontier's struggle for autonomy.

Stewart was born in 1734 in Hanover, a backwoods settlement in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. His family, along with thousands of Scots-Irish, had immigrated to the backcountry in the late 1720s. By the time he was thirty seven, Pennsylvania wanted

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<sup>1</sup>William Maclay to James Tilghman, April 2, 1773, Robert J. Taylor, ed., *The Susquehannah Company Papers*, 11 vols. (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1968), 5:80 (hereafter cited as *SCP*).

Stewart for murder, assault, riot, arson, and treason.<sup>2</sup> A close reading of one of the outlaw's many run-ins with the law demonstrates how his turbulent career can provide insights into backcountry.

On September 15, 1770, Justice of the Peace John Philip De Hass and Constable Frederick Buhlman, aided by three deputies, arrested Stewart in Lebanon, a small town within a days journey of the Pennsylvania frontier. Events began to turn against De Hass and Buhlman when Stewart managed to inform a friend, William Stoy, of his plight and, more surprisingly, convinced the deputies who held him to desert. Rather than escorting his prisoner to the county jail, De Hass found himself scrambling to find new guards. Meanwhile, Stewart made his escape with the help of Stoy's nephew, Matthias Mause, when Mause gave Stewart the ax handle he used to beat Constable Buhlman "in a Cruel and Unmerciful manner." De Hass rushed to the constable's aid and called for bystanders to assist him "in His Majesty's Name," but the people of Lebanon ignored the command. Moments later, a score of armed frontiersmen rode into the village to rescue Stewart. A pistol in one hand and the ax handle in the other, the outlaw dared De Hass to take him. The justice, who had retreated to an inn, declined to take up the challenge. Before Stewart left town, he confronted the innkeeper who harbored De Hass and threatened to "cut him to Pieces, and make a Breakfast of his Heart" if he ever aided another officer of the law.<sup>3</sup> Stewart's graphic threat adds a unique flavor to this encounter, but his willingness to defy authority was common, both along the Pennsylvania frontier and throughout the American backcountry.

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<sup>2</sup> Oscar Jewell Harvey, *A History of Wilkes-Barre* (Wilkes-Barre: 1909), 2:640-644; Stewart Pearce, *Annals of Luzerne County* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1866), 100-119.

<sup>3</sup> Deposition of John Philip De Hass, September 26, 1770, Samuel Hazard, ed., *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania*, 16 vols. (Harrisburg: Theo. Fenn & Co., 1852), 9:682-684 (hereafter cited as *CRP*).

This confrontation between Stewart and Pennsylvania officials mirrors disturbances throughout the early American backcountry. Moreover, it touches upon Stewart's involvement in the unrest that plagued Pennsylvania's northeast frontier between the mid-eighteenth century and the Revolution. Indeed, it was Stewart's efforts to aid New Englanders who had illegally settled in Pennsylvania that had led its provincial government to order his arrest.

Conflicts over property and power placed Stewart and thousands of other backcountry inhabitants on a collision course with government authorities. The promise of land drew people to America's hinterlands, but the process of frontier expansion often devolved into a violent struggle as land disputes erupted between individuals and colonies. Such was the case in the cockpit of contention in pre-revolutionary northeast Pennsylvania--the Wyoming Valley. Here settlers from Connecticut and Pennsylvania battled over land while their respective colonial governments vied to defend their own territorial claims. Likewise, authority became a focus of conflict along the frontier; in particular, government officials seeking to extend their rule over the backcountry often met resistance from settlers who defined power in more local, informal terms. Indeed, Lebanon's citizens refused to come to the aid of John De Hass and Frederick Buhlman because they recognized that Stewart's friends, neighbors, and kin provided him with a level of local power and influence that provincial authorities could not match. Such flagrant disregard for state power was particularly pronounced in regions like the Wyoming Valley, where colonies vied with each other for supremacy and thus allowed settlers a great degree of latitude in their relations with competing sets of provincial officials.<sup>†</sup>

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<sup>†</sup> For two articles that discuss how disputes over property and authority sparked unrest along the early American frontier, see Alan Taylor, "'A Kind of War': The Contest for Land on the Northeastern Frontier, 1750-1820," *William & Mary Quarterly* 46 (January 1989): 3-26 (hereafter cited as *WMQ*); and Charles Desmond Dutrizac, "Local Identity and Authority in a Disputed Hinterland: The Pennsylvania-Maryland Border in the 1730s," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History & Biography* 115 (January 1991): 35-61 (hereafter

Stewart's dramatic escape from Lebanon illustrates that backcountry disputes over land and authority were, on a local level, highly personalized struggles that involved ordinary settlers. Only with the help of William Stoy, Matthias Mause, and a score of armed frontiersmen did Lazarus Stewart overpower Constable Buhlman and face down Justice De Hass. The Wyoming dispute, like the episode at Lebanon, was similarly shaped by frontier inhabitants' personal relationships. Along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier, face-to-face networks embodied in households and neighborhoods framed settlers' aspirations as well as their struggles for property and power.<sup>5</sup> This parochial perspective should not be construed as mere narrow-mindedness but as a central feature of an intensely localist backcountry ethos. To individuals like Lazarus Stewart, the legal origins and political dimensions of the Wyoming dispute were of little importance; what was important were the local, day-to-day aspects of the conflict. Settlers perceived disputes over land and authority in such local terms because these conflicts intersected with their daily lives in meaningful ways.

The contests that shaped Pennsylvania's northeast frontier were woven into the fabric of Lazarus Stewart's life. Stewart's involvement in the Wyoming dispute, as well as the role he played in a much broader pattern of frontier dissent in Pennsylvania, reveal the wider historical context of backcountry protest. Likewise, his actions highlight the ideological components of backcountry dissent, for his goals and attitudes reflect the intense localism and pursuit of personal independence that colored backcountry protest.

The period that saw Lazarus Stewart emerge as Pennsylvania's most infamous frontier outlaw (roughly 1760 to 1780) also witnessed the genesis of revolutionary backcountry localism. The surge of migration that brought Stewart and thousands of others to the frontier in the second and third quarters of the eighteenth century often outpaced the

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cited as *PMHB*).

<sup>5</sup> Charles Dutrizac stresses the importance of local social networks in "Local Identity and Authority," 35-36, 55-56, 60.

spread of effective government rule, thus giving settlers a large degree of local autonomy. It was this local independence that allowed men like Lazarus Stewart to defy outside authority. The American Revolution, which further tested the stability of formal authority, bolstered backcountry localism. However, before turning to a discussion of settlement, conflict and local autonomy in the backcountry, it is necessary to look back to 1753, when Stewart was still a lawful and loyal inhabitant of Pennsylvania.

### **The Wyoming Dispute**

A search for the roots of agrarian unrest in northeast Pennsylvania leads in three directions. First, it requires an examination of the colonial charters that brought Connecticut and Pennsylvania into conflict. Next, it involves a close look at the Connecticut-based land companies that orchestrated settlement into Pennsylvania as well as the social and economic forces that led to their creation. Most of this analysis focuses on Connecticut's most active land corporation, the Susquehannah Company. Finally, it entails charting the events that set the stage for the large-scale settlement of New Englanders in Pennsylvania.

Before the Revolution, the struggle that pitted Connecticut, Connecticut-based land companies, and Yankee settlers against Pennsylvania and its land claimants centered on the Wyoming Valley. Thus, this confrontation over land and jurisdiction became known as the Wyoming dispute. The struggle soon evolved from a legal battle waged between colonies and land companies to a violent backcountry conflict waged by settlers from New England and Pennsylvania. This bloodshed, known to contemporaries as the First Pennamite-Yankee War, lasted for three years. Yankee settlers emerged victorious from the struggle and paved the way for the formal extension of Connecticut's jurisdiction west of the Delaware River--a state of affairs that was the last through the revolutionary war.



Northeast Pennsylvania's frontier disturbances grew out of problems endemic to British America: conflicting colonial borders and overlapping land grants. Imperial officials, who often possessed little knowledge of the American landscape they parceled out, issued vague or inaccurate patents that either interfered with earlier grants or suffered encroachments from competing claims. Moreover, Indians, who never held European notions of ownership or maintained the strict political hierarchy needed to regulate their land sales to Europeans, commonly resold the same piece of land to different purchasers. Colonists, desiring to claim for themselves as much New World territory as possible, actively encouraged imperial officials' geographical fictions and Indians' problematic land transactions.<sup>6</sup> Connecticut and Pennsylvania, like their neighboring colonies, experienced the problems that attended flawed colonial charters and uncontrolled Indian purchases.

In 1662 Connecticut obtained a generous royal charter from Charles II. The colony, which owed its existence to the ambitions of its Puritan founders rather than the crown, petitioned for the charter after deciding that it would be wise to acquire a royal seal of approval over their colonial enterprise. What the province received satisfied its leaders' most optimistic expectations: not only did imperial officials allow Connecticut to maintain its status as a semi-autonomous colony, they also awarded the province a massive tract running from its eastern frontier west to the "South Sea." Thus, on paper, Connecticut's territory extended from its border with Rhode Island to the Pacific ocean, creating a country 120 miles wide by several thousand miles long.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Taylor, "'A Kind of Warr'," 4-5, 11; Michael A. Bellesiles, *Revolutionary Outlaws: Ethan Allen and the Struggle for Independence on the Early American Frontier* (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1993), 27-32; Thomas L. Purvis, "Origins and Patterns of Agrarian Unrest in New Jersey, 1735-1754," *WMQ* 39 (October 1982): 602-610. Philip J. Schwarz examines the politics of border disputes between New York and its neighboring colonies in *The Jarring Interests: New York's Boundary Makers, 1664-1776* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1979).

<sup>7</sup> William E. Price, "A Study of a Frontier Community in Transition: The History of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, 1750-1800" (Ph.D. diss., Kent State Univ., 1979), 9; Robert J. Taylor, *Colonial Connecticut: A History* (Millwood, NY: KTO Press, 1979), 29.



Although no one seemed to notice at the time, the royal grant that established Pennsylvania in 1681 awarded the colony's proprietor, William Penn, territory well within Connecticut's 1662 charter bounds. Specifically, the northern third of Pennsylvania (lands between the forty-second and forty-third parallels of latitude) arguably belonged to Connecticut. Penn's royal gift brought forth no howls of protest from Connecticut. The reason for this was simple: in 1664 Charles II had created the colony of New York after winning the territory from the Dutch, which drove a wedge between New England and the rest of North America and effectively cut Connecticut off from its western territory. Connecticut accepted this state of affairs and let its extensive western claim lay dormant for almost a century. Only when Connecticut began to experience a land shortage in the 1750s did its inhabitants begin to reassert their dormant charter claims.<sup>8</sup>

Connecticut's yeoman farmers and rural gentry, not its governor or assembly, provided the initial impetus behind using the colony's 1662 charter to justify western expansion. Connecticut recognized New York's borders (the colony had formally set its boundary with New York in 1731) but ignored Pennsylvania's in the pursuit of their western claim. Thus, the threat to Pennsylvania's territorial integrity originated not with a formal political challenge from Connecticut, but with social and economic ferment among New England's rural inhabitants. Two trends resulting from rapid population growth during the eighteenth-century--land shortages and land speculation--encouraged Connecticut Yankees to revive their colony's lapsed territorial claims and to form land companies to orchestrate the formation of new western settlements.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Taylor, *Colonial Connecticut*, 56-59; Louise Welles Murray, *A History of Old Tioga Point and Early Athens* (Wilkes-Barre, PA: Reader Press, 1907), 222-223; *SCP* 1:lviii.

<sup>9</sup> Taylor, *Colonial Connecticut*, 55-56; *SCP* 1:liiiv-lix. For an examination of the intercolonial politics surrounding the New York-Connecticut border dispute see Schwarz, *The Jarring Interests*, 60-73

From the start, Connecticut-based land companies played a central role in the struggle for property and power along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier. The Susquehanna Company, along with the First and Second Delaware companies, purchased and settled lands in Pennsylvania. A convergence of circumstances at mid-century motivated Connecticut's inhabitants to form land companies and embark upon bold plans of western settlement. During the first half of the eighteenth-century, Connecticut's population more than quadrupled and occupied most of the colony's open lands. A shortage of good, affordable farmland was especially pronounced among eastern Connecticut's older towns. In addition to population pressure, an upsurge in land speculation, both within Connecticut and throughout colonial America, fueled popular interest in frontier expansion. Finally, imperial confrontations with France caused British officials to encourage the creation of frontier settlements to act as a buffer between New France and British America. Taken together, these conditions made it seem logical, even necessary, that Connecticut should rekindle its claim to territory lying west of New York.<sup>10</sup>

In May 1750, the inhabitants of Simsbury sent a petition to Connecticut's General Assembly requesting a town grant west of the Hudson River in order to relieve overcrowding in their community. Although the legislature rejected the petition, other towns joined Simsbury in its call for Connecticut to assert its latent charter claims. Between 1750 and 1753, the General Assembly received a total of twelve petitions asking for land in the colony's western claim. A petition submitted by the inhabitants of several eastern Connecticut towns in March 1753 contained the first mention of the region that was to later become the center of contention in northeast Pennsylvania: the fertile Wyoming Valley. Connecticut's government ignored all of these entreaties. Ultimately, the petitioners shelved plans to obtain modest town grants from the legislature and set out

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<sup>10</sup> Price, "Frontier Community in Transition," 16; Richard L. Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967), 83; *SCP* 1:xli-lxiii, lxv.

upon a far more ambitious scheme: establishing a settlement company that would create a colony west of the Delaware River. By May 1753, the outlines of the Susquehannah Company and its colony-founding program had come into focus.<sup>11</sup>

The first meeting of the Susquehannah Company took place on July 18, 1753 in Windham, Connecticut. This event, more than any other, laid the foundations for conflict along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier. Interest in the venture soon spread among Connecticut's would-be speculators and frontier settlers. The company, which started with only a few hundred members in 1753, increased its shareholders to eight hundred a little over a year later. The value of company shares kept pace with its expanding membership. In 1753 shares sold for "Two Spanish Mill'd dollars;" about a year later they sold for five; by November 1754, the price had increased to nine dollars. The Susquehannah Company's spectacular growth reflected the growing commercialization of eighteenth-century frontier expansion, but its structure and methods mirrored the traditions of seventeenth-century New England.<sup>12</sup>

The Susquehannah Company's structure and operation evoked the town-founding traditions of Puritan New England. Like New England towns, the company was not a legally chartered corporation but a self-created entity whose existence depended upon the consensus of its members. Moreover, in a political structure highly reminiscent of seventeenth-century town corporations, Susquehannah Company shareholders held meetings at which they voted on all major policy issues. A standing committee (much like the selectmen of New England towns) dealt with all the day-to-day business that came

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<sup>11</sup> Julian P. Boyd, "Connecticut's Experiment in Expansion: The Susquehannah Company, 1753-1803," *Journal of Economic and Business History* 27 (1931), 40-41; Price, "Frontier Community in Transition", 23-25; *SCP* 1:lviii-lxiv.

<sup>12</sup> Minutes of a Meeting of the Susquehannah Company, July 18, 1753, *SCP* 1:28-29; Minutes of a Meeting of the Susquehannah Company, May 1, 1754, *Ibid.*, 186-187; Minutes of a Meeting of the Susquehannah Company, November 20, 1754, *Ibid.*, 168; Boyd, "Connecticut's Experiment in Expansion," 42.

before the company--activities such as collecting payment for shares or surveying company townships--and tempered this "shareholder democracy." Finally, the Susquehannah Company, like seventeenth-century towns, based itself on a concept of corporate ownership; in short, it was a commercial body whose members held an equal right to all the lands it possessed.<sup>13</sup>

The Company's vision of forming a new Connecticut took a great step towards reality when the company purchased over five million acres of land in the upper Susquehanna Valley from the Iroquois in July 1754. The Albany Conference--a meeting of British America's provincial governments--provided the backdrop for this land transaction. The company bought the property directly from Indians without asking the permission of provincial or imperial officials. When the Susquehannah Company later sought Connecticut's sanction, the governor readily gave his approval but the legislature withheld theirs, a stance it would maintain for seventeen years.<sup>14</sup>

Like most private purchases of Indian land, the Susquehannah Company's deed stood on shaky legal ground. First and foremost, provincial and imperial authorities frowned upon such freelance acquisitions of Indian land and considered them illegal. In addition, Pennsylvania had obtained a deed from the Iroquois several days before the New Englanders. This document not only assigned Pennsylvania some of the same land that had been purchased by the Susquehannah Company, it also bore a number of Indian signatures that appeared on the Susquehannah Company's deed. In the face of all these problems, the Company considered its purchase valid.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *SCP* 1:xxxii, lxxiv-lxxv; Boyd, "Connecticut's Experiment in Expansion," 42-43; John Frederick Martin, *Profits in the Wilderness: Entrepreneurship and the Founding of New England Towns in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1991), 4, 149, 185.

<sup>14</sup> *SCP* 1:lxvii-lxviii; Deed from Indians of the Six Nations to the Susquehannah Company, July 11, 1754, *Ibid.*, 101-121.

<sup>15</sup> *SCP*, 1:xxxiv-lxxxv.

The origins of the Susquehannah Company's competitors, the First and Second Delaware companies, remain obscure, but it can be said that they arose out of the same social ferment that led to the formation of the Susquehannah Company. The Delaware companies made purchases of Indian land in 1754 and 1755 that gave them possession of territory north of the forty-second parallel, between the Delaware River and a line running parallel to, and ten miles east, of the Susquehannah River. These companies, whose organization and activities remain unclear, never maintained the vigor of the Susquehannah Company and increasingly acted in concert with their more successful counterpart. Like the Susquehannah Company, the Delaware companies ignored challenges to their Indian purchases and forged ahead with their plans of settlement.<sup>16</sup>

Connecticut land corporations attracted hundred of members whose shares quickly rose in value and successfully negotiated sizable purchases of Indian land, but they met several setbacks when they attempted actual settlement. The Seven Years' War was the first obstacle to the occupation of Connecticut's western claim. New Englanders suspended frontier settlement during a time when Indian attacks threatened backcountry settlements and when the demands of war overshadowed all other endeavors. Britain's victory over France in 1763 did not brighten the company's prospects: imperial officials, fearing that unregulated frontier expansion would result in a destructive Indian war, forbade settlement in the Wyoming region.<sup>17</sup>

Even though they lacked Connecticut's official support and faced opposition from both Pennsylvania and imperial officials, New Englanders established fledgling settlements along the Delaware and Susquehanna Rivers in the closing years of the Seven Years' War.

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<sup>16</sup> *SCP*, 1:xxxviii-lxxxix; Delaware Indian Deed to Delaware Company, December 20, 1754, *Ibid.*, 196-200; Delaware Indian Deed to First Delaware Company, May 6, 1755, *Ibid.*, 260-272; Delaware Indian Deed to Second Delaware Company, October 19, 1755, *Ibid.*, 308-314.

<sup>17</sup> *SCP* 2:i-xlii; *Ibid.* 3:i.

In May 1762, the Susquehannah Company voted to send one hundred settlers to Wyoming. In accordance with this resolve, 109 New Englanders crossed into Pennsylvania and occupied a tract along Mill Creek, a tributary of the Susquehanna. This was not the only site of activity--some years earlier the Delaware companies had formed settlements along the Delaware River.<sup>18</sup> Small and isolated, these frontier communities hardly posed a threat to Pennsylvania's authority; however, from these seeds would grow Connecticut's western colony. James Alexander, a member of New Jersey's Council, recognized the potential danger embodied in the Yankee pioneers. He advised Pennsylvania's governor, Robert Hunter Morris, to break up the New Englanders' settlements as quickly as possible and warned that "A Penny expended to nip this Affair in the Budd will save Pounds that it might afterwards cost."<sup>19</sup> In hindsight, it is clear that Pennsylvania would have been wise to heed Alexander's words.

One thing quickly became clear to Pennsylvania officials: Connecticut claimants would resist all attempts to remove them. In June 1762, Northampton County Sheriff John Jennings employed John Williamson to discover the disposition of Delaware Company settlers; what he found did not please his employer. When the New Englanders found out that Williamson worked for Jennings, they threatened that "if any Sheriff came to molest them they wou'd tie a Stone about his Neck, & send him down to his Governor."<sup>20</sup> Again and again, Pennsylvania found that it could not rid itself of Yankee interlopers. In the end, the solution to Pennsylvania's problems came from an unexpected source: Indian war parties.

On October 15, 1763, Indian warriors destroyed the Susquehannah Company's settlement at Mill Creek. This attack formed part of Pontiac's Rebellion, a large-scale

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<sup>18</sup> Minutes of a Meeting of the Susquehannah Company, May 19, 1762, *SCP* 2:130-131; Minutes of a Meeting of the Susquehannah Company, July 27, 1762, *Ibid.*, 145-146; Harvey, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 1:402-403; *SCP* 2:xvii.

<sup>19</sup> James Alexander to Robert Hunter Morris, October 27, 1754, *SCP* 1:150-151.

<sup>20</sup> Deposition of John Williamson, June 18, 1762, *SCP* 2:137.



Indian uprising that struck the Pennsylvania frontier with deadly force. Throughout the backcountry, settlers scrambled to defend themselves and stem the flow the of the Indian onslaught. Lazarus Stewart, who had gained his first military experience leading a company of provincials during Braddock's ill-fated expedition in 1755, served as a captain of a ranger company during the crisis.<sup>21</sup>

Stewart's involvement in putting down Pontiac's Rebellion set the stage for his entry into the Wyoming dispute. In the fall of 1763, Pennsylvania ordered one hundred men under the command of Captain Asher Clayton to proceed to the Wyoming Valley, remove the Connecticut settlers, and destroy their crops in order to deny them to invading Indians. Stewart's company formed part of this expedition. When Clayton's troops arrived at Wyoming, they found the New Englanders' homes plundered and deserted. Indians had arrived a couple of days earlier and "most cruelly butchered" ten settlers; the rest apparently fled. One victim, a woman, had been "roasted;" the rest "had Awls thrust into their Eyes, and Spears, arrows, Pitchforks, &c sticking in their Bodies." Instead of removing the Yankees, the Pennsylvanians ended up burying them.<sup>22</sup> This carnage provided Lazarus Stewart with his first view of the region that would later become his home; it also foreshadowed his own death in the Wyoming Valley at the hands of Indians fifteen years later.

The Fort Stanwix treaty of 1768 finally opened the way for the mass migration of New Englanders into northeast Pennsylvania and ignited disputes over property and authority that would plague the region for the next five decades. The treaty, which established a dividing line between Indian and white settlements, became the focus of both Pennsylvania's proprietors and Connecticut claimants. Pennsylvania saw the Fort Stanwix

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<sup>21</sup> Harvey, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 2:640-641; Pearce, *Annals of Luzerne County*, 101.

<sup>22</sup> SCP 2:xxxvi; Ibid. 4:v; Alexander Graydon to James Burd, October 16, 1763, Ibid. 2:272; Extract from the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 27, 1763, Ibid., 277; George W. Franz, *Paxton: A Study of Community Structure and Mobility in the Colonial Pennsylvania Backcountry* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1989), 66-67.

treaty as a opportunity to purchase and settle Indian lands along the Upper Susquehanna. Connecticut land companies interpreted the treaty negotiations as a cancellation of imperial orders forbidding the settlement of the Wyoming region and as a go-ahead for their plans of frontier expansion. In the end, the treaty satisfied both sides' expectations and opened northeast Pennsylvania to the axes and plows of colonists.<sup>23</sup>

Before the ink had even dried on the Stanwix treaty, Pennsylvania and Connecticut claimants set about surveying and settling the area. Connecticut's land companies decided that the agreement eliminated the risk of an Indian war and voted to revive their settlement efforts. Pennsylvania also took measures to secure its northeast frontier. First, proprietary agents purchased all the lands lying between the East and West Branches of the Susquehanna River from the Iroquois, thereby preempting the Susquehannah Company's Indian deed of 1754. Second, Governor John Penn leased one-hundred-acre tracts in the Wyoming Valley to Amos Ogden, a wealthy Indian trader from New Jersey, John Jennings, a leading Northampton County official, and Charles Stewart, a wealthy New Jersey speculator, for a term of seven years. Governor Penn authorized these men to issue leases to settlers who promised to support Pennsylvania against the inroads of Connecticut claimants. By enlisting the power and influence of the well-to-do trio, John Penn hoped to form a bulwark against invading New Englanders.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, in 1769, settlers replaced provincial officials, land company agents, and imperial authorities as the main players in Connecticut's and Pennsylvania's territorial dispute. Events in northeast Pennsylvania, not Philadelphia, Hartford, or London, came to set the tone of the conflict as rival claimants jostled for supremacy along the frontier. In his correspondence with John Penn, Charles Stewart referred to Connecticut claimants as

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<sup>23</sup> *SCP* 3:i-v, ix-xiii.

<sup>24</sup> *SCP* 3:ix, xiii-xxvi; Minutes of a Meeting of the Susquehannah Company, December 28, 1768, *Ibid.*, 43-47; Instructions to Charles Stewart and Others, 1769 *Ibid.*, 331-332; James Kirby Martin, "The Return of the Paxton Boys and the Historical State of the Pennsylvania Frontier, 1764-'774," *Pennsylvania History* 38 (April 1971): 126.

"Yankys," a nickname that stuck. Soon after, the region's Pennsylvania claimants became known as "Pennamites." As the size of each faction increased, so did tensions. Within months, contention between Pennamites and Yankees turned into a bloody frontier conflict.<sup>25</sup>

Between 1769 and 1771 northeast Pennsylvania witnessed a see-saw battle for property and power known as the First Pennamite-Yankee War. The Wyoming Valley changed hands five times between November 1769 and August 1771; however, in the summer of 1771 Connecticut claimants won control of the region.<sup>26</sup> This conflict produced two legacies. First, it ushered in a period of Yankee domination that would last for a decade. Second, and more lasting, it inaugurated a pattern of violence against persons and property. Baltzer Stager, one of several Pennsylvania frontiersmen who joined Wyoming's Yankees, became the first victim of agrarian violence in the Wyoming region when a Pennamite bullet took his life on March 28, 1770.<sup>27</sup> Though Pennsylvania's proprietors proved skilled legal adversaries, Pennamite settlers proved less able to counter Yankee invaders when the Wyoming dispute changed from a battle between charter claims into a shooting war.

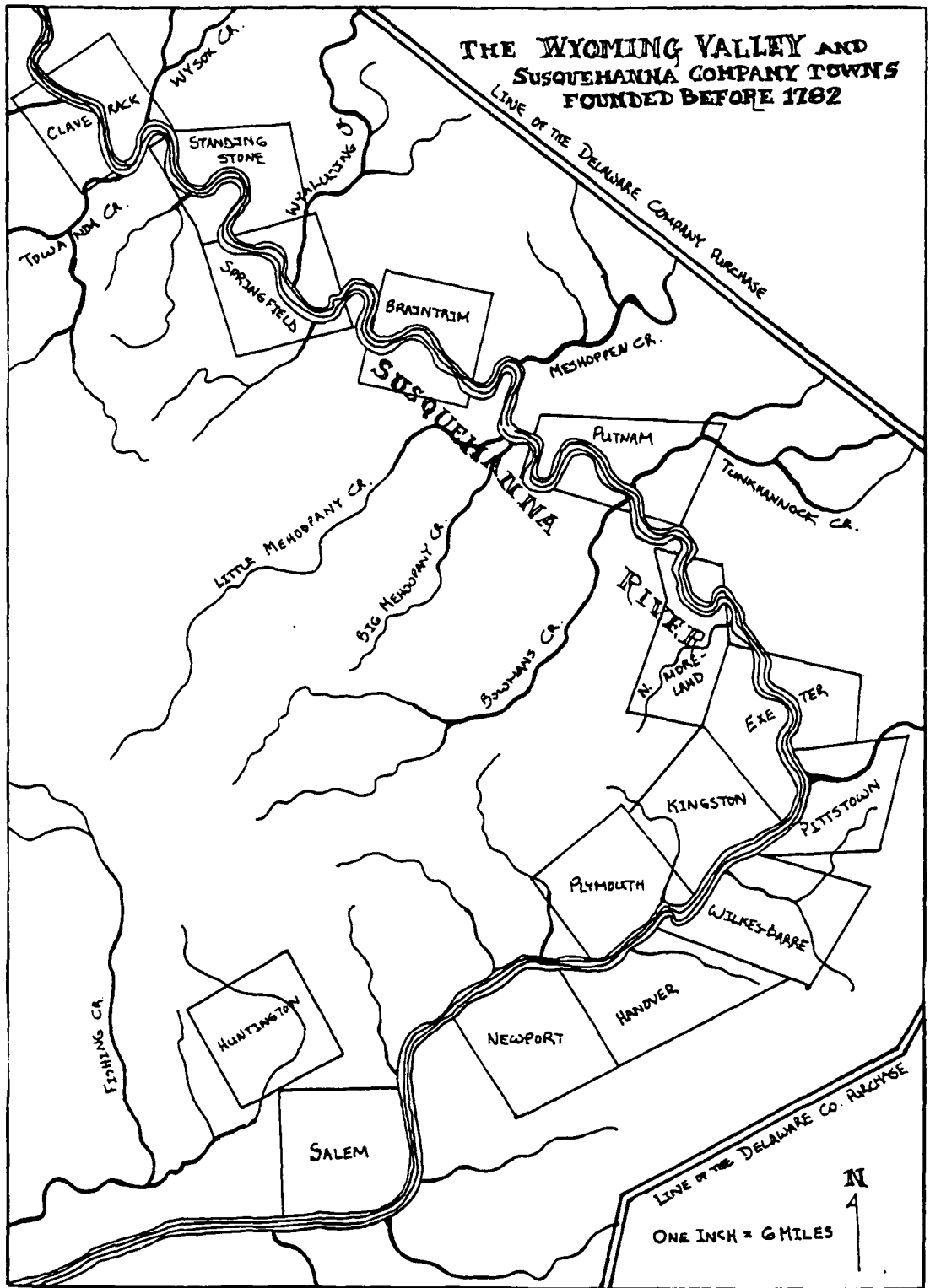
Drawing on deep-seated traditions of popular protest and collective action, Connecticut claimants waged war on Pennsylvania settlers. Like rural rioters across early America, Yankee settlers assaulted and plundered their adversaries. John McDonner, a Yankee

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<sup>25</sup> Harvey, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 1:488.

<sup>26</sup> For a narrative of the first Pennamite Yankee war see James R. Williamson and Linda A. Fossler, *Zebulon Butler: Hero of the Revolutionary Frontier* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1995), 18-25; Harvey, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 2:625-796; and Frederick J. Stefon, "The Wyoming Valley," in John B. Frantz and William Pencak, ed. *Beyond Philadelphia: The American Revolution in the Pennsylvania Hinterlands* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1998), 133-152.

<sup>27</sup> Eliphalet Dyer and Others to Jonathan Trumbull, March 27, 1771, SCP 4:192; Memorandum Book of Zebulon Butler, February-May, 1770, Ibid., 81.



settler, recalled how he and twenty-eight companions painted themselves like Indians and "abused & Robbed" Amos Ogden and his followers. Zebulon Butler, the Yankees' leading man, kept a memorandum book in which he recorded similar assaults on Pennamites. On February 23, 1770, he noted that "the Boys went and Laid Solomon's House level with the Earth." Five days later, Yankees "Leveled [Charles] Stewarts House to the Ground."<sup>28</sup> While Pennsylvania's proprietary agents busied themselves with the arrest and prosecution of Yankee rioters, Connecticut claimants used mob tactics against their foes; the later strategy proved to be more effective.<sup>29</sup>

Connecticut claimants eventually won control of the area because they were able to develop a straightforward strategy of frontier insurgency that depended on direct action and strong local leadership; in contrast, Pennamites relied upon provincial authority and the influence of well-connected gentlemen to maintain their soil rights. Pennamites won control of the Wyoming Valley on several occasions, yet they failed to hold it. Poses and hired gunmen provided Pennsylvania with the lion's share of the forces it used to overpower Yankee settlers. Mobilizing men from outside the Wyoming region gave Pennsylvania the ability to overrun Yankee settlements on several occasions, but when these troops returned home, Connecticut claimants regained the upper hand. For example, late in 1769 Pennamites overwhelmed Yankee resistance when John Jennings used his position as Northampton County Sheriff to muster a two-hundred man posse and Captain Alexander Patterson, another proprietary land holder, brought up reinforcements and

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<sup>28</sup> Edward Countryman, "'Out of the Bounds of the Law': Northern Land Rioters in the Eighteenth Century," in Alfred F. Young, ed., *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Univ. Press, 1976), 39, 49-56; Eliphalet Dyer and Others to Jonathan Trumbull, March 27, 1771, *SCP* 4:194-195 n. 36; Zebulon Butler's Memorandum Book, Feb-May 1770, *Ibid.*, 80, 82.

<sup>29</sup> Warrant for the Arrest of Lazarus Stewart and Others, March 20, 1770, *SCP* 4:50-51; Presentment of Lazarus Stewart and Others by the Northampton County Grand Jury, June, 1770, *Ibid.*, 92-93; Deposition of Amos Ogden, May 25, 1770, *Ibid.*, 73-74; Deposition of Nathan Ogden, May 25, 1770, *Ibid.*, 75-76.

cannon from Fort Augusta. Likewise, in September 1770, Amos Ogden captured the Wyoming Valley and plundered its Yankee settlers with the help of 150 men who followed him in return for a share of the spoils.<sup>30</sup> On both occasions, Pennsylvania forces dispersed after their victories and dispossessed Yankees quickly restored their supremacy.

The aggressive tactics of Connecticut claimants, combined with Pennsylvania's lack of local support, ultimately undermined the province's hold on its northeast frontier. Early in July 1771, about seventy Connecticut claimants (including a number of renegade Pennsylvanians led by Lazarus Stewart) besieged Pennamites who held out in Wyoming's fort. John Jennings, Amos Ogden, and Charles Stewart--all of whom had to attend to interests outside the valley--were absent when the invasion occurred. Asher Clayton, who had led Pennsylvania troops to Wyoming in 1763, ended up commanding the eighty-two men, women, and children who occupied the fort.<sup>31</sup> As in the past, Pennsylvania found itself unable to muster men fast enough to counter the Connecticut claimants' offensive. Clayton surrendered Wyoming's fort on August 15 after an attempt to reinforce and reprovision his besieged command left one Pennamite killed and two wounded.<sup>32</sup> Days later, Pennsylvania Council Secretary Joseph Shippen, Jr. asserted that the governor and assembly would find "effectual Means" for removing the "Nest of Villains, Murderers and Banditti" who had overrun the Wyoming Valley. However, Pennsylvania fell short of Shippen's expectations: the government exhibited little inclination to continue the fight. With Clayton's capitulation, the First Pennamite-Yankee War came to an end.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Harvey, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 2:626-627, 669-671; Eliphalet Dyer to William Samuel Johnson, December 15, 1770, *SCP* 4:142.

<sup>31</sup> John Thompson to Charles Stewart, July 5, 1771, *SCP* 4:219; Minutes of the Pennsylvania Council, July 16, 1771, *Ibid.*, 223; James Hamilton and Others to Edmund Physick, July 17, 1771, *Ibid.*, 225; Affidavit of Asher Clayton, August 22, 1771, *Ibid.*, 252-254.

<sup>32</sup> Harvey, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 2:700, 702-703; James Tilghman and Joseph Shippen Jr. to Lewis Gordon, July 26, 1771, *SCP* 4:226-227; John Dick to Lewis Gordon, August 1, 1771, *Ibid.*, 230; Articles of Capitulation, August 15, 1771, *Ibid.*, 241.

<sup>33</sup> Joseph Shippen, Jr. to Edward Shippen, August 21, 1771, *SCP* 4:251-252.

This Yankee victory gave the Susquehannah Company the leverage it needed to convince Connecticut to extend its jurisdiction beyond the Delaware River. But the colony moved slowly toward annexing northeast Pennsylvania and it took three years for Connecticut to officially recognize its western colony. In March 1774, Connecticut formed the territory held by the Susquehannah and Delaware companies into the town of Westmoreland and attached it to Litchfield County. This act marked the culmination of Yankee efforts to create New England-style institutions along the Pennsylvania frontier. Before long it became obvious that a town government or a distant county administration could not effectively rule such a large country. As a result, Connecticut's General Assembly made the town of Westmoreland into the colony's seventh county (also named Westmoreland) in 1776.<sup>34</sup>

In the years following the First Pennamite-Yankee War, Connecticut claimants flooded into settlements along the Delaware and Susquehannah rivers. The region's Yankee population, which numbered only a couple of hundred in 1771, reached the two thousand mark by 1774 and neared three thousand two years later.<sup>35</sup> John Franklin and John Jenkins, Jr. were two of the Yankee immigrants who participated in this folk movement. John Franklin, whose father had purchased a Susquehannah Company share in 1754, married Lydia Dolittle on February 2, 1774, and set off a week later for the Wyoming Valley. There he occupied his right, raised a family, and served in a variety of town and county offices. John Jenkins, Jr., whose father had taken a leading role in Susquehannah Company affairs since 1769, came to Wyoming in 1772, married, and gained local

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<sup>34</sup> Minutes of a Meeting of Westmoreland, March 1, 1774, *SCP* 6:144-146.; *SCP* 5:xxxiv; Price, "A Study of a Frontier Community in Transition", 126-127; An Act Making Westmoreland a County, October, 1776, *SCP* 7:23-24. For a more complete examination of the rise of Connecticut's rule west of Delaware, see Richard T. Warfle, *Connecticut's Western Colony: The Susquehannah Affair* (Hartford: The American Revolution Bicentennial Commission of Connecticut, 1979), 28-37.

<sup>35</sup> Boyd, "Connecticut's Experiment in Expansion," 62; Harvey, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 2:876-878.

prominence in the valley's growing Yankee enclave.<sup>36</sup> Frontier expansion afforded these two individuals the opportunity to gain a level of status that probably would have been denied to them in older communities to the east. Indeed, Franklin and Jenkins rose through the ranks, both among their fellow settlers and within the Susquehannah Company's hierarchy.

The Wyoming dispute was not unique; in fact, similar episodes of contention and violence occurred throughout the American backcountry. These disturbances emerged out of jurisdictional and territorial disputes between colonies; moreover, they were often fueled at the grass-roots level by backcountry inhabitants who struggled over land and authority. Finally, on a deeper level, this frontier discord was shaped by the face-to-face relationships and small-scale social networks that formed the fabric life in the backcountry.

### **The Backcountry**

In February 1770, Lazarus Stewart journeyed to the Wyoming Valley to join the New Englanders who had settled there in defiance of Pennsylvania provincial government. Late in 1769, he and other leading men from Hanover, Paxton, and Donegal--townships that constituted Lancaster County's frontier district--began negotiations with the Susquehannah Company. The frontiersmen offered to rid the company's lands of Pennamite settlers in return for a land grant; the New Englanders eagerly accepted the deal.<sup>37</sup> Pennsylvania's proprietors soon got wind of this alliance. In January John Penn warned his brother Thomas that the Connecticut claimants had "a strong party amongst our Frontier Settlers, who call themselves Paxton Boys." Two months later, John informed Thomas that over

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<sup>36</sup> Harvey, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 1:467-468; David Craft, *History of Bradford County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co., 1878), 101-102; Minutes of a Meeting of Westmoreland, March 1, 1774, *SCP* 6:145.

<sup>37</sup> *SCP* 4:vi-vii; Petition of Lazarus Young and Others, September 11, 1769, *SCP* 3:176-177; The Executive Committee to John Montgomery and Lazarus Young, January 15, 1770, *SCP* 4:5-6; Martin, "The Return of the Paxton Boys," 120, 128-130.



fifty "lawless villains" had marched from Lancaster County and "plundered & destroyed" the homes of proprietary tenants at Wyoming.<sup>38</sup>

The involvement of Lazarus Stewart and his Paxton Boys in the Wyoming dispute highlights the wider historical context of conflict along the early American frontier. Their challenge to Pennsylvania's authority illustrates that issues close to the hearts of frontier farmers--access to land, local autonomy, and good governance--underlay agrarian insurgency. Finally, Lazarus Stewart and the Paxton Boys highlight how popular discontent and the weakness of formal authority along the frontier combined to create a fertile ground for the growth of backcountry localism.

Charles Stewart and Pennsylvania Governor Robert Hunter Morris both knew that the Wyoming dispute was not unique but formed a link in a chain of backcountry disturbances. In 1769 Stewart described the New Englanders who had established settlements along the Susquehanna as "miscreants composed of the dregs of the Colony of Connecticut, Pendergrass' gang of rioters from New York Government, and horse-stealers, debtors and other runaways." Fifteen years earlier, Robert Hunter Morris informed Thomas Penn that the "Impunity of the Jersey Rioters" had set a bad example for Pennsylvanians and encouraged many of them to support the Connecticut claim and to "hold the Land by Force as the Jersey Men do."<sup>39</sup> Stewart's mention of "Pendergrass' gang" referred to rebellious farmers who challenged the power of New York's Hudson Valley landlords during the 1750s and 60s; Morris' remarks about the "Jersey Rioters" pointed to the land riots that gripped northern New Jersey in the 1740s and 50s. Both men may have overstated the links that existed between agrarian disturbances in New York,

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<sup>38</sup> John Penn to Thomas Penn, January 1, 1770, *SCP* 4:1-3; John Penn to Thomas Penn, March 10, 1770, *Ibid.*, 42-43.

<sup>39</sup> Extract from the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, December 21, 1769, *SCP* 3:216-217; Robert Hunter Morris to Thomas Penn, December 26, 1754, *SCP* 1:208.

New Jersey, and the Pennsylvania backcountry but their observations make it clear that Pennsylvania's frontier inhabitants were not alone in their fight for property and power.<sup>40</sup>

Nor was Pennsylvania a stranger to land disputes, jurisdictional conflicts, and unruly frontiersmen; indeed, the colony's backcountry troubles exemplify the inter-colony disputes and popular dissent that destabilized the early American frontier. Between the 1730s and 1750s, settlers from Pennsylvania and Maryland fought for control of territory west of the Susquehanna River. Likewise, in the years leading up to the Revolution, Pennsylvania and Virginia became embroiled in a similar struggle over settlers' allegiance and jurisdictional rights in a region lying south and west of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers.<sup>41</sup>

Between the mid-eighteenth century and the Revolution, Pennsylvania faced both external and internal threats to its control over territory north of the forty-second parallel. Externally, Yankee settlers, Connecticut-based land companies and, later on, Connecticut's provincial government challenged Pennsylvania's jurisdiction and soil rights. Internally, the province's backcountry inhabitants, vexed by an inequitable system of land distribution and years of poor governance, turned their back on the colony's proprietary regime. Pennsylvania feared that backwoods dissidents within the province would ally themselves with the New Englanders who challenged the province's territorial integrity. Indeed,

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<sup>40</sup> For studies of agrarian unrest in New Jersey, New York, and the Hampshire Grants, see Thomas L. Purvis, "Origins and Patterns of Agrarian Unrest," 600-627; Sung Bok Kim, *Landlord and Tenant in Colonial New York: Manorial Society, 1604-1775* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1978); Schwarz, *The Jarring Interests*, 168-174; and Bellesiles, *Revolutionary Outlaws*. Disturbances on the Maine frontier are explored in Taylor, "A Kind of Warr." For discussions of backcountry conflict in the South see James P. Whittenburg, "Planters, Merchants, and Lawyers: Social Change and the Origins of the North Carolina Regulation," *WMQ* 34 (April 1977): 215-238 and Rachel N. Klein, "Ordering the Backcountry: The South Carolina Regulation," *WMQ* 38 (October 1981): 661-680.

<sup>41</sup> Dutrizac, "Local Identity and Authority," 35-61; Dorothy E. Fennell, "From Rebelliousness to Insurrection: A Social History of the Whiskey Rebellion, 1765-1802" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Pittsburgh, 1981), 5-43.

Governor John Penn worried that northeast Pennsylvania would be "seized upon by a Banditti." The arrival of the Paxton Boys in the Wyoming Valley in 1770 only confirmed his fears.<sup>42</sup>

Lazarus Stewart contributed to the rising tide of violence along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier. On January 20, 1771, he shot and killed Amos Ogden's brother, Nathan Ogden. The incident occurred days after Stewart and his followers had entered the Wyoming Valley, ejected its Pennamite garrison, and taken possession of their fort. In response to this turn of events, Northampton County Sheriff Peter Kachlein raised a posse, which included Deputy Sheriff Nathan Ogden, and surrounded Stewart's party. After days of waiting, Ogden and several other members of Kachlein's party approached the fort and tried to talk its occupants into surrendering. Stewart ended these negotiations when he placed his rifle through a loophole and fired--Nathan Ogden cried "Oh God Almighty" and fell to the ground dead. Soon, others in the fort opened fire and wounded three other Pennsylvanians. As in the past, Lazarus Stewart and his men escaped justice: the night after the killing they slipped out of the fort and fled.<sup>43</sup>

Unrest along the northeast frontier formed part of a much larger revolt threatening the stability of the Pennsylvania backcountry. On a cold December day in 1763, Stewart took a leading role in this rebellion when he led over fifty mounted frontiersmen from Paxton township and its environs into Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The riders made straight for the county jail, stormed the building, and killed fourteen Indians--men, women, and children alike--who sought refuge within its walls. One Lancaster inhabitant who rushed to the jail after the killers left was sickened by the sight of the victims "spread about the prison yard; shot, scalped, hacked, and cut to peices." Like a shock wave, news of the "Paxton Boys"

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<sup>42</sup> John Penn to Thomas Penn, January 1, 1770, *SCP* 4:2-3.

<sup>43</sup> Charles Stewart to John Penn, January 21, 1771, *SCP* 4:153-154; Deposition of William Sims, January 21, 1771, *Ibid.*, 155-156; Deposition of William Nimens, January 25, 1771, *Ibid.*, 156-157; Deposition of Peter Kachlein, January 31, 1771, *Ibid.*, 163-164; Charles Stewart to John Penn, January 21, 1771, *Ibid.*, 153

massacre spread throughout the province. The Paxton Boys justified their actions by claiming that their victims had aided Indians who had recently attacked their settlements. Pennsylvania outlawed the frontiersmen and ordered their arrest but none of the perpetrators were ever brought to trial.<sup>44</sup>

The massacre of Indians at Lancaster formed a single, albeit infamous, episode of the endemic lawlessness and dissent that undermined Pennsylvania's authority along the frontier. Weeks after the Paxton Boys' murderous raid, hundreds of backcountry inhabitants marched on Philadelphia with the intention of killing Indians harbored there by the government and to seek vengeance on the government officials they blamed for the poor state of frontier defense during Pontiac's War. The rioters never achieved their aims, but they did succeed in highlighting the rebellious mood that gripped Pennsylvania's hinterlands.<sup>45</sup> In 1765 the Pennsylvania frontier experienced another outburst of violent protest, this time in Cumberland County, when backcountry inhabitants, fearing that government-sponsored traders intended to sell firearms to Indians, attacked and plundered pack-trains laden with trade goods. Later, the rioters, who became known as "Black Boys" because of the soot with which they smeared their faces, resisted British troops and colonial authorities who attempted to restore order.<sup>46</sup> Finally, in January 1768, Frederick

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<sup>44</sup> Robert Proud, *The History of Pennsylvania in North America*, in John R. Dunbar, ed., *The Paxton Papers* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1957), 25, 29; Sheriff John Hay to Governor John Penn, December 22, 1763 & December 27, 1763, *CRP* 9:102-103; James Kirby Martin, "The Return of the Paxton Boys," 117-118; Harvey, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 2:640-641.

<sup>45</sup> For an overview of Pennsylvania's frontier crisis, see Alden T. Vaughn, "Frontier Banditti and the Indians: The Paxton Boys' Legacy," *Pennsylvania History* 51 (January 1984): 1-29; Brooke Hindle, "The March of the Paxton Boys," *WMQ* 3 (October 1946): 461-486; and Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*.

<sup>46</sup> Eleanor M. Webster, "Insurrection at Fort Loudon in 1765, Rebellion or Preservation of the Peace?," *Western Pennsylvania History Magazine* 47 (April 1964): 125-140; Fennell, "From Rebelliousness to Insurrection," 10; Lt. Col. Reid to General Gage, June 1, 1765 & June 4, 1765, *CRP* 9:268-269; General Gage to Governor John Penn, June 16, 1769, *Ibid.*, 267-268.

Stump and John Ironcutter murdered ten Indians. Again, backcountry people defied provincial authority: when Cumberland County officials arrested Stump and his accomplice, a mob descended upon the county jail and set them free.<sup>47</sup>

Backcountry inhabitants' pursuit of land, good governance, and local autonomy motivated their opposition to Pennsylvania's proprietary regime. Lancaster County's Paxton Boys and Cumberland County's Black Boys resisted government authority because it failed to equitably distribute, or effectively rule, its frontier lands. Moreover, backcountry inhabitants murdered Indians and robbed traders because they perceived them as a threat to their security. In the long run, backcountry inhabitants' resort to direct action helped them to establish a sense of autonomy; more important, the collective, community-sanctioned nature of their extralegal activities encouraged the development of localism.<sup>48</sup>

Government mismanagement did much to exacerbate social unrest along the frontier. In Pennsylvania, the governor (a proprietary appointee who sought to protect the authority of the Penn family) and the assembly (which was elected by the colony's freeholders and worked to limit proprietary power) spent much of their time fighting one another instead of addressing the province's problems. In addition, Pennsylvania's local authorities lacked the powers they needed to make up for the shortcomings of the provincial government. County-level government, instead of serving local needs, was often little more than an instrument of political patronage. The governor, an appointee himself, commonly assigned

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<sup>47</sup> Martin, "Return of the Paxton Boys," 121-123; Deposition of William Blyth, January 19, 1768, *CRP* 9:414.

<sup>48</sup> Richard M. Brown, "Back Country Rebellions and the Homestead Ethic in America, 1740-1799", in Richard M. Brown and Don E. Fehrenbacher, ed., *Tradition, Conflict, and Modernization: Perspectives on the American Revolution* (New York: Academic Press, 1977), 76-79. Several scholars have also explored the willingness of urban mobs to "supplement" formal authorities: Gordon S. Wood, "A Note on Mobs in the American Revolution," *WMQ* 23 (October 1966): 635-642 and Pauline Maier, "Popular Uprisings and Civil Authority in Eighteenth-Century America," *WMQ* 27 (January 1970): 3-30.

county posts not on the basis of merit but as a reward to friends and political allies.<sup>49</sup> Pennsylvania's efforts to impose its authority over the Wyoming region provides a perfect example of the nepotism that hobbled local government. Amos Ogden, an Indian trader turned proprietary land holder, became a justice of the peace for Northampton County in 1769. Likewise, Charles Stewart, another of Wyoming's proprietary agents, also benefited from his alliance with John Penn. Like Ogden, Stewart became a county magistrate in 1769 and soon after gained the much more important post of deputy-surveyor for Northampton County. Both Stewart and Ogden were New Jersey natives who owed their offices to provincial political connections rather than grass-roots support.<sup>50</sup>

Local power was not the only thing that became a political commodity in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania: the province's unsettled lands served as a source of patronage that benefited the few rather than a public resource that met the needs of the many. On March 27, 1769, sixty-three frontier inhabitants, including Lazarus Stewart, sent a petition to the Pennsylvania Assembly to express their dissatisfaction with colony's land policies. In particular, the petitioners asserted that favoritism had denied them access to lands in Pennsylvania's "New Purchase" (territory between the North and West Branches of the Susquehanna obtained by the colony in 1768.) Even though land office regulations limited land claimants to three-hundred-acre grants, proprietary friends managed to engross thousands of acres in the New Purchase. Worse still, the land office allowed well-connected gentlemen to file their claims before ordinary settlers had an opportunity to do so, thus, enabling them to secure the best lands. Finally, wealthy gentlemen used their influence to make sure that county surveyors located their warrants while ignoring the needs of common folk.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Franz, *Paxton: A Study of Community Structure*, 17, 25-27, 30-31.

<sup>50</sup> Harvey, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 1:457-458, 459.

<sup>51</sup> SCP 3:xv-xviii, Edmund Physick to Thomas Penn, April 19, 1769, Ibid., 101-102, 103 n. 2; Edmund Physick to Thomas Penn, September 28, 1769, Ibid., 185; Martin, "Return of the Paxton Boys," 126-127.

Pennsylvania's backcountry inhabitants did not remain inactive in the face of this injustice and corruption. In numerous ways frontier people opposed (or just ignored) government authority. Backcountry inhabitants commonly refused to pay their quitrent--an annual proprietary tribute of one penny for every hundred acres purchased from the colony. Furthermore, settlers completely side-stepped government regulation and illegally occupied, or "squatted," along the frontier. This practice was by no means uncommon; indeed, by the middle of the eighteenth century thousands of squatters occupied Pennsylvania's backcountry lands.<sup>52</sup> These inhabitants not only defied government authority but actually supplanted it. Along the West Branch of the Susquehanna, a group of squatters known as the "Fair Play Men" ignored provincial laws forbidding settlement in the region and even established their own local political institutions and legal codes. Likewise, the Black Boys who troubled Cumberland County officials in 1765 also usurped government authority and regulated the movement of Indian traders through their territory.<sup>53</sup>

Concern among Pennsylvania's backcountry inhabitants for effective local government and fair land policies set the stage for the Paxton Boys' alliance with the Susquehannah Company. Individuals like Lazarus Stewart journeyed to northeast Pennsylvania because they believed that Connecticut's western claim provided them with an opportunity to obtain frontier lands and escape from Pennsylvania's rule. Indeed the Paxton Boys' alliance with the Susquehannah Company rested on the New Englanders' offer of free land. In addition, life in Connecticut's western colony--more specifically, life in New-England style towns--offered Stewart and his followers a level of local autonomy absent in Pennsylvania.

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<sup>52</sup> Franz, *Paxton*, 86, 99.

<sup>53</sup> George D. Wolf, *The Fair Play Settlers of the West Branch Valley, 1769-1784: A Study of Frontier Ethnography* (Harrisburg: The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1969), 30-46; "Advertisement" of Cumberland County Rioters, May 25, 1765, *CRP* 9:271; Fennell, "From Rebelliousness to Insurrection," 6, 9-12.

Backcountry inhabitants did not spend the majority of their time fighting government authorities and one another; on the contrary, they devoted most of their energy toward clearing land and building communities. After the First Pennamite-Yankee War, even a veteran frontier agitator like Lazarus Stewart devoted himself to farming and recreating the network of family and friends he had left behind in Lancaster County. He was not alone in this endeavor. Many of the men who joined Stewart in his move to the Wyoming Valley were close kin: William, James, and Lazarus Stewart, Jr. journeyed to northeast Pennsylvania in 1770; they were joined there by kinsmen Robert and Peter Kidd, William and Robert Young, and Lazarus Stewart's first cousin, Lazarus Young. In addition to ties of kinship, a common place of origin bound Stewart to his Wyoming Valley neighbors. John Laird, George Mease, John Stiller, and George Espy all hailed from Stewart's Pennsylvania birthplace, Hanover. Furthermore, many of these men had served under Lazarus Stewart during the Seven Years' War and later followed him as frontier outlaws; now, they became his neighbors and fellow townsmen.<sup>54</sup>

Securing farms in the Wyoming Valley did not allow Yankees or the Paxton Boys to beat their swords into plowshares, for conflict formed part of the fabric of daily life in the backcountry.<sup>55</sup> Disputes over land and authority did not come to an end with the First Pennamite-Yankee War but remained a prominent feature of local life. The governments of Pennsylvania and Connecticut did not prod settlers into continuing the fight over property and power; on the contrary, frontier inhabitants possessed their own reasons for engaging in such struggles.

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<sup>54</sup> William H. Egle, *History of the Counties of Dauphin and Lebanon in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania: Biographical and Genealogical* (Philadelphia: 1883), 71; Idem, "The House of Lancaster to the Rescue," *Proceedings and Collections of the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society* 6 (1901):103.

<sup>55</sup> Daniel Vickers, "Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America," *WMQ* 47 (January 1990): 3-29.



The contentiousness that marked Lazarus Stewart's life did not evaporate when he took up residence in the Wyoming Valley. In the summer of 1773, a committee assigned to resolve land disputes between Susquehannah Company settlers reported that "Mathw Hollinback was one of Capn Stewarts Associates but had so neglected his Duty that Capn Stewart & his Associates Judged him Unworthy & have refused to Allow him a Setling right in Hanover." Here, the company minutes referred to Matthias Hollenback, a former inhabitant of Hanover township in Lancaster County, who had joined Lazarus Stewart in his move to the Wyoming Valley. The committee did not specify what duties Hollenback neglected but simply stated that they "found no reason to dissent from Capn Stewarts doings."<sup>56</sup> However, the dispute over Hollenback's town share was far from finished; over the course of the following year, Hollenback not only regained his land but Stewart lost some of his sway among Connecticut claimants.

After the First Pennamite-Yankee War, Stewart's influence in Westmoreland declined; once a hero of the Susquehannah Company, Stewart became the loser in quarrels with Yankee settlers. Nine months after the Susquehannah Company supported Stewart's actions against Hollenback, it reversed its earlier decision and voted "that the Said Mathw Hollenback shall have & Injoy his said Right In Said Town of Hanover." The fact that Hollenback provided an important service to Yankee settlers by keeping a store at Wilkes-Barre may have had something to do with the committeemen's reticence to eject him from the Wyoming Valley. At a third company meeting held in May, 1774, the company not only reaffirmed Hollenback's town share but also failed to offer any compensation to Lazarus Stewart for lands granted to him "att Wapwallopin and afterwards Located To Others."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Luke A. Sarsfield, "Matthias Hollenback: Early Wyoming Valley Entrepreneur" (Ph.D. diss., New York Univ., 1973), 23-25; Minutes of the Susquehannah Company, June 2, 1773, *SCP* 5:145.

<sup>57</sup> Minutes of a Meeting of the Susquehannah Company, March 9, 1774, *SCP* 5:328; Minutes of a Meeting of the Susquehannah Company, May 24, 1774, *SCP* 6:252-253;

Stewart's difficulties formed part of a larger split that occurred between the Paxton Boys and New Englanders. Such factionalism should not come as a surprise, for the premium frontier settlers placed on face-to-face relationships and local autonomy could easily translate into a suspicion of outsiders. As early as October 1771, reports reached Pennsylvania's proprietors that "a disagreement between the New England Men and Stewarts Party" had arisen. The informants did not specify the source of the trouble but Susquehannah Company records show that the dispute undoubtedly concerned the company's agreement to grant the Paxton Boys a township. A March 1772 meeting of Wyoming's inhabitants sheds some light on the issue. At this gathering Yankee settlers voted to lay out a separate township for the Paxton Boys along Fishing Creek, "in Lieu of Nantecock which ye Paxton took in Lieu of ye six mile township." Disagreement arose when the Paxton Boys demanded Nanticoke, one of the five original townships laid out by the Susquehannah Company, instead of waiting to have new six-mile-square township located and surveyed as they had originally agreed. Seven months later, Wyoming's inhabitants resolved the dispute when they voted to let the Paxton Boys occupy Nanticoke township; however, bad feelings produced by the confrontation lingered.<sup>58</sup>

The formation of frontier social networks generated conflict as settlers battled over resources and local influence. Indeed, Yankees did not just quarrel with Paxton Boys but also with each other. In October 1773, a group of Wyoming inhabitants petitioned the Susquehannah Company, complaining that Asa Brown and thirteen of his kinsmen and neighbors had, "in a Turbulent & hy handed maner with force & violence and many hard threatning oaths & bitter swearing," robbed an eel weir in the Susquehanna River. What started as a case of riot and theft became a contest over allegiance. When asked to

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Harvey, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 2:720.

<sup>58</sup> James Hamilton and Others to Thomas and John Penn, October 8, 1771, *SCP* 4:274; Minutes of a Meeting in Wilkes-Barre, March 11, 1772, *Ibid.*, 308; Minutes of a Meeting of the Proprietors in Wilkes-Barre, October 19, 1772, *SCP* 5:51-52.

account for his behavior, Asa Brown had "Publicly Declared that he had Rather the Penemites Should Come & hold this Land than this Company" and added that the company officials who tried his case could "Kiss his ass." In return for his disloyalty, Connecticut claimants banished Asa Brown from their settlements. Here and elsewhere, contention that normally marked rural society became attached to Wyoming's larger political and territorial disputes.<sup>59</sup>

In the backcountry, community-building did not equal social harmony. Settlers continued their struggles for land and power; these disputes should not be seen simply as byproducts of backcountry inhabitants loyalty to Pennsylvania, Connecticut, or land companies. On the contrary, conflict was a regular feature of agrarian life. Moreover, contentiousness was not just a product of interpersonal conflict but also of the values and belief systems that pervaded the backcountry during the eighteenth century. Thus, a search for the ideological origins of agrarian unrest requires that we assess how the process of settlement--as well as the tensions it generated--refashioned the lives of frontier migrants. However, such a search also leads in another direction: to explore how the America's struggle for independence reshaped how backcountry inhabitants viewed their world.

### **The Revolution**

Eight months after the Battle of Lexington and Concord, Wyoming's Yankee inhabitants received their own baptism of fire; they did not confront British regulars but "a body of Tories, under the command of one *Plunket*." In December 1775, William Plunket, a Northumberland County magistrate, led over five hundred volunteers up the East Branch of the Susquehanna to break up Connecticut's western colony. Four hundred men under the command of Zebulon Butler intercepted the invaders at a defile in the lower part of the

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<sup>59</sup> Petition of John Jenkins and John Grant to the Settlers' Committee, October 11, 1773, *SCP* 5:171; Warrant for the arrest of Asa Brown, October 14, 1773, *Ibid.*, 172; Minutes of a Meeting of the Proprietors and Settlers in Wilkes-Barre, October 26, 1773, *Ibid.*, 174.

Wyoming Valley on December 21. After several unsuccessful attempts to breach Yankee defenses, the Pennsylvanians retreated, carrying off six dead and wounded. Plunket described his defeat as a setback in Pennsylvania's long-standing efforts to impose its authority over the Wyoming region; Yankees heralded their victory as a blow struck for American liberty.<sup>60</sup>

Plunket's expedition demonstrates how the Revolution became subject to frontier farmers' local agendas and parochial perspectives. In the days leading up to the fight, a Connecticut claimant charged that the Pennsylvanians "had Connection with all the Torrys far and Near" and planned to "fall on the Backs of the Continental troops" once they had transformed the Wyoming Valley into a Loyalist bastion.<sup>61</sup> Here and elsewhere, Yankees collapsed distinctions between local events and larger issues: they intertwined the threat Plunket's forces presented to their settlements with the danger Great Britain presented to the American colonies.

Frontier inhabitants' localist outlook and experience shaped their perceptions of the Revolution. In turn, the Revolution recast local culture in the backcountry. The move for independence only further undermined formal authority along the frontier by discrediting imperial rule and provincial governments and by legitimating local struggles for autonomy. However, rather than determining the course of events along the frontier, the Revolution often became enmeshed in the local politics of backcountry disputes over property and power.<sup>62</sup> As the confrontation between Plunket's Pennsylvanians and Wyoming's Connecticut claimants illustrates, backcountry inhabitants interpreted the Revolution

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<sup>60</sup> Extract from the *Connecticut Courant*, January 22, 1776, *SCP* 6:422-423; Extract from the *Connecticut Courant*, January 22, 1776, *Ibid.*, 423-425; Sheriff William Scull and Others to Governor Penn, December 30, 1775, *Ibid.*, 425-426.

<sup>61</sup> Deposition of Daniel Saint John, December 12, 1775, *SCP* 6:410-411.

<sup>62</sup> For insights into how localism shaped frontier inhabitants' perceptions of the Revolution, see Gregory T. Knouff, "'An Arduous Service': The Pennsylvania Backcountry Soldiers' Revolution," *Pennsylvania History* 61 (January 1994): 45-74.

through a lens of local expectations. In this case, Yankees identified their Pennamite foes as Tories and identified themselves as patriots. This tendency to interpret the meaning of larger events through personal experience was by no means unique to the backcountry. What was noteworthy, however, was the way frontier settlers used the revolutionary movement to legitimize their struggles for land, local autonomy, and personal independence.

Along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier, the Revolution became intertwined with old rivalries. Pennamites became known as Tories not so much because of their opposition to American independence but because of their resistance to Connecticut's western claim. Meanwhile, Yankees took up the title of Patriots in the hope that the Continental Congress would recognize their soil rights. Ultimately, Yankees' harassment of Pennamite settlers drove the latter into Britain's embrace.<sup>63</sup> Eventually, lines separating Pennamites from Tories became blurred and, at times, disappeared altogether.

Connecticut claimants refurbished existing Pennamite-Yankee enmity by wrapping it in the issue of revolutionary allegiance. Indeed, many of the people Yankees accused of being Tories had close ties with Pennsylvania. For example, Westmoreland's Committee of Inspection informed Adonijah Stansbury that he was "suspected of Toryism" in January 1777 because of his ties with Charles Stewart who, after being forced from his Wyoming lands, had taken the post of a Pennsylvania surveyor.<sup>64</sup> Another settler, Frederick Vanderlip, paid for his fraternization with Pennsylvania surveyors and his support of proprietary soil rights when Yankee settlers expelled him for holding land "under ye pretension of ye title of Pennsylvania." Yankees branded Vanderlip and dozens of other

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<sup>63</sup> Ann M. Ousterhout, *A State Divided: Opposition in Pennsylvania to the American Revolution* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 231-240.

<sup>64</sup> Committee of Inspection to Adonijah Stanburrough and Others, January 1, 1777, *SCP* 7:33; Charles Stewart to Adonijah Stansbury, December 9, 1775, *SCP* 6:401-402.

Pennsylvania claimants as Loyalists. In the end, Vanderlip fled the upper Susquehanna Valley and like dozens of other dispossessed Pennsylvania claimants joined Bulter's Rangers, a Loyalist military unit.<sup>65</sup>

The Revolution not only provided opportunities to reinvent old conflicts but served as a pretext to extend local struggles over land and political influence. The war for independence brought about confrontations between Yankees and settlers who lived north of the Wyoming Valley. Before that point, these two groups had managed to live in relative harmony even though they often held their land under different jurisdictions. In December 1775, Zebulon Butler received a letter warning him that "the Pennamites up the river" had formed an alliance with Plunket's men. The letter represents the first time that Connecticut claimants referred to up-river settlers as Pennamites; it also represents the first of a chain of events that transformed them into Tories.<sup>66</sup>

The first sign of serious trouble between Connecticut claimants and the squatters and Pennsylvania claimants who occupied settlements to their north appeared on January 6, 1777, when Westmoreland settlers voted to send a force up the Susquehanna River to confiscate weapons from upriver inhabitants who refused to bear arms against Plunket's forces and to inform them that they had to conform to the laws of Connecticut. Wyoming's Yankees took a dim view of their northern neighbors for several reasons. First, they were outsiders. Many of the people who settled along the northern reaches of the Susquehanna had come to the region in the 1770s from settlements along the Mohawk River Valley; moreover, most of the newcomers were not English but German or Dutch. Second, upriver settlers interfered with the expansion of Yankee communities. Even if

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<sup>65</sup> Minutes of a Meeting of the Proprietors and Settlers Held in Wilkes-Barre, September 14, 1773, *SCP* 5:167-168; Minutes of a Meeting of the Proprietors and Settlers in Wilkes-Barre, November 22, 1774, *SCP* 6:292-293; Ousterhout, *A State Divided*, 272-273 n.

<sup>66</sup> Anonymous Letter to Zebulon Butler, December 10, 1775, *SCP* 6:406.

these people accepted Connecticut titles, they still occupied valuable riverside lands that Yankee settlers hoped to reserve for their own use.<sup>67</sup>

Friction between Yankees and upriver settlers devolved into a serious civil conflict. By labeling upriver inhabitants "Tories," Yankees provided themselves with an excuse to take action against them. Connecticut claimants used the authority of extralegal patriot committees to intimidate and dispossess the Pennamites. Indeed, Westmoreland officials removed James Secord and John Dupue, two leading upriver settlers, from command of a Westmoreland militia company and replaced them with New England men.<sup>68</sup> Ultimately, this campaign of harassment accomplished the Yankees' objective: the removal of upriver inhabitants. However, their methods also pushed many of these people into the waiting arms of the British. Scores of upriver settlers fled Pennsylvania for New York. Some took up residence with the British at Fort Niagara and joined Loyalist military units. In all, about thirty upriver settlers ended up serving under the king's colors. Many of these men would return to the Wyoming Valley not as settlers but as Tory raiders.<sup>69</sup>

In many ways, America's fight for independence mirrored the struggle of backcountry settlers for land and autonomy. However, frontier inhabitants had battled for self-determination long before America's patriot leaders called for freedom from Britain's imperial tyranny. Thus, the pursuit of property and power along the frontier cannot be wholly attributed to revolutionary fervor. An agrarian vision of independence that predated the revolution--a vision that imbued property ownership and local power with great significance--framed settlers' attitudes and actions.<sup>70</sup> Yeoman farmers perceived

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<sup>67</sup> Meeting of Westmoreland Inhabitants, January 6, 1776, *SCP* 7:1; Ousterhout, *A State Divided*, 245, 272-273 n.; Harvey, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 2:867, 1049-1050.

<sup>68</sup> Harvey, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 2:857, 874.

<sup>69</sup> Ousterhout, *A State Divided*, 240, 234-235, 272-273; Nathan Denison to Oliver Wolcott, September 20, 1777, *SCP* 7:36; Harvey, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 2:944-945.

<sup>70</sup> Allan Kulikoff, *The Agrarian Origins of Capitalism* (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of

independence as a social and economic status: a condition in which households possessed the resources necessary to provide for their "competency" (a minimal level of material comfort and security). More important, independence signified household autonomy--a state of being in which families did not have to sell their labor, enter into patron-client relationships, or go into debt in order to make ends meet.<sup>71</sup>

Material security and household autonomy, not isolation, were the primary goals of rural families. Yeomen did not seek to sever ties with their neighbors; in fact, agrarian independence rested on maintaining neighborhood exchange networks, ties of kinship, and participation in commercial markets. Rather, rural people sought to avoid the antithesis of independence, dependency. Dependency signified relationships such as indebtedness to local merchants or reliance on wealthy gentlemen for wages or access to land. Yeomen farmers viewed such dependent relationships not only as an economic disadvantage but as a threat to their political privileges, social status, and self-worth.<sup>72</sup> Dependency was a social status associated with women and children. Thus, a man who became dependent on others lost his masculinity as well as social status and economic autonomy.<sup>73</sup>

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Virginia, 1992), 35-36, 130-132, 147; Brown, "Homestead Ethic," 73-79; Vickers, "Competency and Competition," 7.

<sup>71</sup> Vickers, "Competency and Competition," 3-4; Jack P. Greene, "Independence, Improvement, and Authority: Toward a Framework for Understanding the Histories of the Southern Backcountry During the Era of the American Revolution" in Ronald Hoffman, Thad W. Tate, and Peter J. Albert, ed., *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry During the American Revolution* (Charlottesville: The Univ. Press of Virginia, 1985), 12-13.

<sup>72</sup> Kulikoff, *Agrarian Origins of Capitalism*, 36, 42; Taylor, *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement on the Maine Frontier, 1760-1820* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1990), 82-85; Vickers, "Competency and Competition," 7-8, 9-10, 11; Richard Bushman, "This New Man,": Dependence and Independence, 1776," in Richard Bushman, et. al., ed., *Uprooted Americans--Essays in Honor of Oscar Handlin* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1979), 81.

<sup>73</sup> The relationship between masculinity and agrarian independence is touched upon in Daniel Vickers, *Farmers & Fishermen: Two Centuries of Work in Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630-1850* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1994), 14-16; and E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the*



The struggle for agrarian independence was not just an individual concern but a collective enterprise carried out by family and kin. Thus, frontier farmers' pursuit of property and autonomy possessed an important social dimension because it formed an important feature of household and neighborhood relations. Independence rested upon the ability of rural families to accrue property and maintain access to resources. To frontier settlers, land represented the crucial ingredient of agrarian independence. Only land could provide the products needed to maintain a family and the commodities necessary to meet the demands of a rapidly expanding commercial market. Moreover, an abundance of land guaranteed that competency and autonomy would be passed down from one generation to the next. At root, rural independence rested on an abundance of land; the object was not just the acquisition of property but keeping family close together in order to provide its members with social and economic security.<sup>74</sup>

The pursuit of independence motivated frontier expansion in early America; it also helped to ignite unrest and rebelliousness. Before and after the Revolution, farmers hoping to find economic security and social autonomy along the frontier became embroiled in conflict with fellow settlers and powerful land speculators. Frontier inhabitants, like rural people throughout early America, fought over land and resources. Most of these disputes were personal and short-lived, others evolved into enduring, wide-spread rural protest movements. Such was the case in northeast Pennsylvania, northern New Jersey, the Hampshire Grants, and elsewhere in the backcountry as settlers, provincial governments, and wealthy speculators clashed over land rights.<sup>75</sup>

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*Revolution to the Modern Era* (Basic Books, 1993), 11-12.

<sup>74</sup> Kulikoff, *Agrarian Origins of Capitalism*, 35; Vickers, "Competency and Competition," 12, 23; Idem., *Farmers & Fishermen*, 19; Andrew R. L. Clayton, *The Frontier Republic: Ideology and Politics in the Ohio County, 1780-1825* (Kent, OH: The Kent State Univ. Press, 1986), 4.

<sup>75</sup> Brown, "Homestead Ethic," 79-86; Kulikoff, *Agrarian Origins of Capitalism*, 41, 44, 63.

This contention over land contained an element of class conflict. Disputes over property and power, especially those that turned into substantial rural protest movements, often drove wedges between rich and poor. However, such friction should not be simply understood as a battle between a rural proletariat and agrarian capitalists; the frontiersmen were capitalists too. Rather, rural inhabitants' pursuit of land and independence engendered more complex and subtle forms of social conflict. The search for competency had an ugly flip side: one household's attainment of material security and autonomy often came at the expense of another. In the backcountry, where land titles and authority were often in dispute, such quarrels became all the more frequent and intense. Such conflicts were not solely, or even primarily, shaped by class. Instead, these disputes arose with reference to local conditions, kinship ties, bonds of friendship, ethnic allegiances, and subtle differences in status.<sup>76</sup> The role that face-to-face relationships played in backcountry disputes over land and authority is more thoroughly examined below. Indeed, the next chapter explores how agrarian unrest in Pennsylvania's Wyoming Valley intersected with interpersonal relationships and the struggle of settlers to secure a subsistence along a war-ravaged hinterland.

On July 3, 1778, Lazarus Stewart's dreams of frontier independence came to a horrible end--he, along with hundreds of Westmoreland men, fell victim to the bullets and scalping knives of Loyalist troops and Indians at the Battle of Wyoming. About four hundred Yankees engaged over seven hundred Loyalists and Indians. After about a half-hour's fighting, disaster struck the Patriot forces when British forces outflanked them. Seeing this threat, Colonel Zebulon Butler ordered his inexperienced troops to fall back and the

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<sup>76</sup> Vickers, "Competency and Competition," 23-29; Sung Bok Kim, "The Impact of Class Relations and Warfare in the American Revolution: The New York Experience," *Journal of American History* 69 (September 1982): 329, 332.

Yankees' retreat turned into a bloody rout. Indians and Tories pursued the panic-stricken Americans and by the day's end they had taken over two-hundred scalps.<sup>77</sup>

The interpersonal disputes that shaped life along the frontier dogged Lazarus Stewart till his dying day. In 1778 Stewart found himself enrolled as a private in Captain McKerachan's company of the Westmoreland County militia. Stewart, who had served as an officer in Wyoming's militia before the establishment of Connecticut's jurisdiction over northeast Pennsylvania, probably owed his declining military fortunes to conflict with his Yankee neighbors. Hours before the Battle of Wyoming, Yankee officers debated whether they should engage the enemy or remain inside Kingston's fort. Always ready for a fight, Stewart accused the men who argued for taking advantage of the fort's protection of being cowards. Not only did Stewart help to convince Westmoreland's men to attack, but he also won command of McKerachan's militia company after the militiamen opted to enter the battle under his experienced leadership.<sup>78</sup>

Once more, Stewart's influence among friends, kinsmen, and neighbors overcame more formal forms of authority. Again, Stewart took on the role of a frontier warrior; however, on this occasion, Stewart led his followers not to victory but to death. Westmoreland's militia did not face ill-trained Pennamites at the Battle of Wyoming but Iroquois warriors and disciplined Loyalist troops. More important, these Indians and Tories both had personal scores to settle: the Indians resented the New Englanders' invasion of their lands; the Loyalists, many of whom had been upriver settlers, sought to revenge themselves upon people who had forced them from their homes. As had often been the case on the frontier, highly personalized disputes over property and power undergirded conflict.

After the Battle of Wyoming, northeast Pennsylvania became an empty, war-torn land. Most settlers abandoned their farms as Indians and Tories continued their raids, leaving

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<sup>77</sup> Harvey, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 2:644, 983, 1004-1018.

<sup>78</sup> Harvey, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 2:1007-1008; Pearce, *Annals of Luzerne County*, 117-118.

only a small garrison of Continental troops and a company of Westmoreland militia to hold the Wyoming region.<sup>79</sup> The revolutionary war created a power vacuum in northeast Pennsylvania. Connecticut's settlements west of the Delaware had been decimated but Pennsylvania had fared little better and lacked the men and resources necessary to retake the region. The issues that had ignited the Wyoming dispute remained unresolved. As the war wound down, Pennsylvania and Connecticut, Pennamites and Yankees, prepared to enter a new round of the conflict.

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<sup>79</sup> Harvey, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 2:1227-1229.

## CHAPTER II PENNAMITES & YANKEES

*If they had Ransacked the Regions of Hell, and brought all the Devils from the Dark Abodes they Could not Collected a worse Set of beings than Patterson and his Infernal Crew--they are in fact the Scum of all Gods Creation.--John Franklin, October 11, 1784<sup>1</sup>*

In the years following the revolutionary war, the Wyoming Dispute became a bitter, highly personalized struggle over land, local authority, settler allegiance, and the very means of subsistence. David Mead, a Pennsylvania magistrate and Pennamite settler, gained firsthand experience of this conflict when Yankee settlers attacked his farm on July 6, 1785. The rioters "beat and abused" Mead's farm hands, knocked down his fences, and plundered his crops to the sound of their "Indian yell." Mead and a dwindling number of Pennsylvania claimants clung to their Wyoming Valley homes in the face of an orchestrated campaign of harassment and violence. Early in the spring, Connecticut claimants had ordered Pennamites to leave the valley and began to forcibly remove those who refused to obey. By summer Yankee mobs roamed at will, terrorizing and dispossessing Pennamites.<sup>2</sup> David Mead gathered evidence against Yankee insurgents and sent reports to Philadelphia describing the crisis but found that he could do little to stop it.

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<sup>1</sup> John Franklin to William Samuel Johnson, Eliphalet Dyer, and Jesse Root, October 11, 1784, Robert J. Taylor, ed., *The Susquehannah Company Papers*, 11 vols. (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1969), 8:119 (hereafter cited as *SCP*).

<sup>2</sup> David Mead to President Dickinson, July 6, 1785, *Pennsylvania Archives*, ed. Samuel Hazard, 1st ser., 12 vols. (Philadelphia: Joseph Severns & Co., 1854), 11:454-455 (hereafter cited as *PA*); David Mead to John Bayard, June 10, 1785, *SCP* 8:244-245; David Mead to President Dickinson, March 30, 1785 (with attached depositions of Charles Manrow, March 24, 1785, Samuel Karr & Daniel Swart, March 25, 1785, and John Cartright, March 30, 1785), *PA* 10:707-710.

After rioters sacked his farm in July, Mead evacuated his wife and children, fortified his home with a ditch and palisade, and hired a number of armed men to garrison the makeshift fort. Connecticut claimants responded by surrounding his home. One day, as Mead penned a plea for help to Pennsylvania's President, John Dickinson, Yankees shot his dog when it wandered beyond the protection of the palisade. The point was clear: along the northeast frontier, Pennsylvania's authority did not extend beyond Mead's doorstep.<sup>3</sup>

Mead's plight marked the climax of the Pennamite-Yankee wars and the collapse of Pennsylvania's authority along its northeast frontier. After the Revolution, the inhabitants of the Wyoming Valley embroiled themselves in another deadly round of frontier warfare. Known as the Second Pennamite-Yankee War, this fight began in the fall of 1783 and continued till Yankee settlers regained control of the region in the summer 1785.

More than state governments or land companies, backcountry inhabitants determined the course and outcome of the Second Pennamite-Yankee War. Settlers undermined state and federal efforts to impose order in the Wyoming region and successfully subordinated the initiatives of outside authorities to local agendas. The pursuit of property and independence set the tone and tempo of unrest in the Wyoming Valley. In addition, interpersonal relationships and small-scale social networks, not abstract, long-distance loyalties, framed the attitudes and behavior of the rioters. The conflict stopped being a jurisdictional dispute between colonies or states and became a struggle over land fought between the inhabitants of a war-torn frontier.

The American Revolution also had an impact on the Second Pennamite-Yankee War. The Revolution reshaped settlers' attitudes toward property and authority. The war for independence devastated the Wyoming Valley and created an atmosphere of material

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<sup>3</sup> David Mead to President Dickinson, July 6, 1785, *PA* 11:454-455; John Franklin to William Samuel Johnson, July 19, 1785, *SCP* 8:251-252.

insecurity that intensified property disputes. Settlers clashed not only over soil rights but over crops, livestock, timber, housing, and other necessities of life on the frontier. The Revolution also served to undermine respect for outside authority: backcountry inhabitants who received little support from federal or state governments during the war against Britain did not necessarily embrace the return of state control after independence. Such was the case in the Wyoming Valley where Pennamites and Yankees ignored, resisted, or subverted government authority. Both of these trends--a preoccupation with day-to-day confrontations over the means of subsistence and opposition to centralized authority--grew out of Wyoming's revolutionary experience. Both also helped to nurture the growing localism of backcountry settlers.

Scrutinizing the reemergence of armed conflict reveals how local squabbles over land and authority overwhelmed efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement to the Wyoming dispute and undermined Pennsylvania's efforts to impose its rule over its northeast frontier. It also highlights how formal government control came into conflict, and often succumbed to, local authority in the revolutionary backcountry. Moreover, examining property disputes between settlers uncovers how agrarian unrest intertwined with backcountry inhabitants' daily lives. Specifically, intense competition between households and neighborhoods over resources crucial to survival along the frontier determined the character of the Second Pennamite-Yankee War just as much as government initiatives. Finally, a search for the reasons behind the Yankee victory over their Pennamite foes sheds light on how interpersonal relationships played a key role in Wyoming's struggle for property and power. In particular, analyzing patterns of allegiance among settlers demonstrates how settlers constructed their collective identity in local terms and how small-scale social networks--family, kin, and neighborhood--provided Connecticut claimants with the strength and unity they needed to retain possession of the Wyoming Valley.

The reasons for the outcome of the second Pennamite-Yankee war can be found within the Wyoming Valley. However, finding the roots of the conflict requires a wider focus. Ironically, Pennsylvania and Connecticut's efforts to seek a bloodless resolution to the Wyoming dispute set the stage for the renewal of armed conflict.

### **Property & Power**

In 1782 Pennsylvania and Connecticut decided to settle their differences in court rather than risk further bloodshed. On December 30, 1782, the judges of a specially convened federal tribunal meeting at Trenton, New Jersey announced their verdict. They ruled "that the Jurisdiction and Pre-emption of all the Territory lying within the Charter boundary of Pennsylvania, and now claimed by the State of Connecticut, do of right belong to the State of Pennsylvania."<sup>4</sup> With these words, Connecticut lost its western colony. This verdict, which came to be known as the Trenton Decree, changed the Wyoming dispute but did not bring it to an end.

The Trenton Decree came down at a time when the power of state and federal government was being tested along the revolutionary frontier. Indeed, contemporaries view the Trenton Decree as the test case of whether or not the United States would be able to impose its will over its hinterlands. Imperial rule was not the only casualty of America's war for independence: the citizens of the new republic, exposed to the instability and empowerment of revolutionary activity, challenged formal authority of every stripe. This spirit of independence was particularly pronounced in backcountry regions where years of bitter warfare and a legacy of pre-Revolutionary land disputes combined with a lack of institutional development and government control to produce high levels of social instability and unrest. Along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier, the contention that resulted in the First Pennamite-Yankee War reemerged with renewed vigor

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<sup>4</sup> Judgment of the Court Convened at Trenton, December 30, 1782, *SCP* 7:245-246.



as Wyoming Valley settlers fought, not just for property and power, but for their very survival in a country devastated by civil conflict and war.<sup>5</sup>

Instead of resolving discord along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier, the Trenton Decree sparked a new phase of conflict. The court resolved the jurisdictional component of the Wyoming dispute but did nothing to settle the competing land claims of Yankees and Pennamites. Even though Pennsylvania gained official sanction to extend its rule over its northern hinterland, Yankee settlers continued to resist the state's authority. The Wyoming region again became the scene of violent competition over land and authority. After briefly cooperating with state and federal efforts to end the dispute, settlers returned to the aggressive pursuit of local interests. Yankees and Pennamites alike allied themselves with government authorities when doing so improved their chances of obtaining land but resisted outside interference when it did not. Under these conditions, it is not surprising that Pennsylvania's efforts to reconcile backcountry inhabitants' competing land claims met with failure.

Between the issue of the Trenton Decree and the outbreak of the Second Pennamite-Yankee War in the fall of 1783, Pennsylvania attempted to end contention along its northeast frontier by accomplishing what the federal government had not: resolving land disputes between Connecticut and Pennsylvania claimants. An investigative committee appointed by the state proceeded to the Wyoming Valley where it set about negotiating a settlement between Yankees and Pennamites. In order to belay Yankees' fears of dispossession, the Pennsylvania Assembly passed an act that stayed all ejectment suits issues against Connecticut claimants. This action came not a moment too soon, for as

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<sup>5</sup> For two works that discuss the impact of the revolutionary war on the frontier, see Peter S. Onuf, *The Origins of the Federal Republic: Jurisdictional Controversies in the United States, 1775-1787* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1983); and Jack P. Greene, ed., *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry During the American Revolution* (Charlottesville: The Univ. Press of Virginia, 1985).

soon as Pennsylvania won jurisdiction over the Wyoming region, Pennamites began to filter north in hopes of securing land.<sup>6</sup>

For a time, Yankee settlers matched the state's overtures toward reconciliation. Connecticut claimants petitioned Pennsylvania for confirmation of Susquehannah Company titles and, in return, promised their loyalty to the state. During the spring and summer of 1783, leading Connecticut claimants opened up talks with state commissioners and sought a trial for soil rights in a federal court.<sup>7</sup> The former negotiations collapsed in late April when Connecticut claimants refused to accept unoccupied lands elsewhere in Pennsylvania as compensation for their Wyoming farms. Yankees' enthusiasm for federal intervention declined as government red tape slowed the rate of progress. Ultimately, hopes for obtaining a federal decision concerning soil rights lingered and died in Congress.<sup>8</sup>

Pennamite-Yankee antipathy grew and the prospect of compromise became more distant as Pennsylvania imposed its authority on Wyoming's Connecticut claimants. Pennsylvania took the first step toward conflict immediately following the Trenton Decree when it decided to garrison Wilkes-Barre with state troops. In February two companies of Pennsylvania rangers drawn from Northumberland and Northampton counties received their marching orders and moved into the Wyoming Valley.<sup>9</sup> The state took a second step

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<sup>6</sup> Resolution of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, February 25, 1783, *SCP* 7:265-267; Act of Pennsylvania to Stay Suits of Ejectment Against Wyoming Settlers, March 13, 1783, *Ibid.*, 270-271.

<sup>7</sup> Petition of Nathan Denison and Others to the Pennsylvania General Assembly, January 18, 1783, *SCP* 7:252-257; The Connecticut Claimants to the Pennsylvania Commissioners, April 19, 1783, *Ibid.*, 276-277; Minutes of a Meeting of the Susquehannah Company, May 21, 1783, *Ibid.*, 293-294; First Congressional Committee Report on the Petition of Zebulon Butler, January 21, 1784, *Ibid.*, 345-346.

<sup>8</sup> Pennsylvania Claimants to the Pennsylvania Commissioners, April 22, 1783, *SCP* 7:282-283; The Pennsylvania Commissioners to the Connecticut Claimants, April 22, 1783, *Ibid.*, 283-284; Connecticut Claimants to the Pennsylvania Commissioners, April 23, 1783, *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>9</sup> Extract from the Minutes of the Pennsylvania Council, February 1, 1783, *SCP* 7:261;

toward conflict when the commissioners it appointed to negotiate a settlement alienated Connecticut claimants by exhibiting blatant favoritism toward Pennamites. Indeed, the only plan of reconciliation the commissioners forwarded to Yankee settlers was penned by Pennsylvania claimants and heavily favored Pennamite interests. The agreement, which would have required Connecticut claimants to vacate their claims in the Susquehanna Valley within one year in order to obtain an equal number of acres on state lands further west, was totally unacceptable to Yankees who had invested years of labor in their Wyoming farms.<sup>10</sup>

Pennsylvania placed itself on a collision course with Yankee settlers in the closing months of 1783. The state suspended negotiations, repealed the act that stayed ejectment suits against Connecticut claimants, and reinforced its garrison in the Wyoming Valley.<sup>11</sup> The last straw came in the spring of 1784 when the state divided the Wyoming Valley into administrative districts and appointed magistrates without the knowledge of Connecticut claimants. This clandestine election led to the appointment of local officials who were partial to Pennamite interests. Soon after, conflict broke out between Connecticut claimants who were determined to maintain their autonomy and freeholds, invading Pennsylvania claimants who hoped to reap rewards from the misfortune of Yankees, and state officials who aimed to impose their authority over Wyoming's unruly frontier inhabitants.<sup>12</sup>

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Instructions to Captains Shrawder and Robinson, March, 4, 1783, *Ibid.*, 268; Thomas Robinson to John Dickinson, March 26, 1783, *Ibid.*, 271-272; Philip Shrawder to John Dickinson, March 29, 1783, *Ibid.*, 272-273.

<sup>10</sup> Pennsylvania Claimants to the Pennsylvania Commissioners, April 22, 1783, *SCP* 7:282-283; The Pennsylvania Commissioners to the Connecticut Claimants, April 22, 1783, *Ibid.*, 283-284.

<sup>11</sup> Repeal of the Act Staying Suits of Ejectment against Connecticut Settlers, September 9, 1783, *SCP*:7, 304-305; Extract from the Minutes of the Pennsylvania Council, September 25, 1783, *Ibid.*, 306-307.

<sup>12</sup> Call for an Election of Magistrates in Two Districts of Wyoming, April 23, 1783, *SCP* 7:286-287; John Franklin to the Governor of Connecticut, May 10, 1784, *Ibid.*, 417, 413.

After the Trenton Decree, Yankees and Pennamites resumed their feud over property and power. Their fight, though long and divisive, reveals that both settler factions mistrusted government authority. Settlers, both Pennamite and Yankee alike, put local concerns before outside loyalties and readily manipulated government rule to serve their own purposes. Like their Yankee counterparts, Pennsylvania's settlers cordoned themselves off from the state when it threatened their property rights. Instead of a two-way battle between Yankees and Pennsylvania, the Second Pennamite-Yankee War evolved into a three-way struggle between two settler factions and the state government. Unfortunately for Pennsylvania, it took state officials a long time to understand how localism had reshaped the dispute.

John Okely and Major John Boyd, two members of a four-man commission appointed by the Pennsylvania Council to investigate Yankee land claims, soon discovered that state authority held only a tenuous foothold among Wyoming's inhabitants. On September 20, 1784, Yankee settlers Phinehas Stevens and Waterman Baldwin accosted Okely and Boyd as they walked through Wilkes-Barre. Okely recounted how Waterman and Stevens "came rushing out of a house" and ordered him and Boyd to halt. Next, Baldwin asked Major Boyd, "an't you, one of the Commissioners that Pull'd off your hat to us when we laid down our arms." Here, Baldwin referred to an event that occurred a month earlier during which Yankees submitted to Pennsylvania magistrates, only to be double-crossed, imprisoned, and delivered into the hands of their Pennamite foes. When Boyd answered that he was, Baldwin yelled, "pull off your hat for me now," and struck Major Boyd in the head with a stick three times "with great Violence."<sup>13</sup> Obviously, those who represented

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<sup>13</sup> Extract from the Minutes of the Pennsylvania Council, September 9, 1784, *SCP* 8:52; Deposition of John Okely, September 22, 1784, *PA*:10, 659; Deposition of James Reed, September 22, 1784, *Ibid.*, 659.

Pennsylvania's authority at Wyoming did not meet with the deference they could have expected under more amiable circumstances.

Another attack upon Okely and Boyd reveals that Pennamites as well as Yankee resented state interference. Six days after commissioners Okely and Boyd were attacked at Wilkes-Barre, they "narrowly escaped" harm when rioters fired upon the house where they lodged. The next day both men fled back to Philadelphia. Yankees claimed that they knew nothing of the attack and accused Pennsylvanians of the outrage. John Franklin, fired with indignation, declared that if Pennamites "had Ransack'd the Regions of Darkness and Consulted all the Infernal Powers of Hell, they could not fram'd a greater falsehood" than blaming Connecticut claimants for the outrage. Franklin's impassioned words ring true: it made little sense for Yankees to murder state officials who had come to the Wyoming Valley to ascertain the legitimacy of their land claims. On the other hand, Pennamites had repeatedly demonstrated their willingness to misinform and misguide the state in their pursuit of private interests. Scaring the commissioners out of the Wyoming Valley would have removed the state's prying eyes and given Pennamites a free hand in dealing with Connecticut claimants.<sup>14</sup>

Both Connecticut and Pennsylvania claimants placed their immediate interests ahead of their obligations to outside authorities. John Armstrong, Jr., one of the many state officials who sought to restore order to the Wyoming Valley, encountered both the outright opposition of Yankees and the more subtle dissent of Pennamites. Armstrong observed that when he tried to enforce the law he was "not only attacked by one, but in a great degree deserted by the other."<sup>15</sup> Instead of helping Pennsylvania to extend its rule across its frontier, Pennsylvania claimants joined Yankees in frustrating state authorities. The

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<sup>14</sup> The Commissioners to John Dickinson, October 1, 1784, *SCP* 8:87; John Franklin, Ebenezer Johnson, and Phinehas Peirce to John Dickinson, October 5, 1784, *Ibid.*, 101; John Franklin to Frederick Antes, Daniel Montgomery, and William Bonam, October 23, 1784, *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>15</sup> John Armstrong, Jr. to John Dickinson, October 25, 1784, *SCP* 8:135.

desire for land and local autonomy motivated Yankees' resistance to Pennsylvania's sovereignty as well as Pennamites' subversion of state power.

Pennsylvania's own misguided attempts to resolve the Wyoming dispute served only to further entangle conflicts over land with the contest over authority. From the start, the state allowed a dangerous conflict of interest to take root among the officials it appointed to end contests over soil rights. Yankee settlers quickly discovered that state commissioners were partial toward the Pennsylvania Land Claimants' Association. Individuals claiming large tracts of land in northeast Pennsylvania under state titles formed this organization soon after the Trenton Decree in order to coordinate efforts to regain their property. Alexander Patterson served as the association's chairman and chief agent. In the spring of 1783, he joined the state officials who journeyed to the Wyoming Valley to resolve conflicting land claims. With Patterson's help, the Land Claimants' Association gained influence with state officials in the Wyoming Valley.<sup>16</sup> The clandestine district elections that led to the appointment of Alexander Patterson, John Seely, David Mead, and Henry Shoemaker as Wyoming Valley magistrates generated the most heated Yankee protest. The unconstitutional nature of this proceeding angered Connecticut claimants; however, it was the impact of the election on local property disputes that most worried Yankee settlers. Obadiah Gore highlighted this fact when he complained that these "private" elections provided the means by which a "whole herd of Pennsylvania landjobbers were set loose upon the Inhabitants to Exercise their wonted avaritious and hellish Practices."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> John Franklin to the Governor of Connecticut, May 10, 1784, *SCP* 7:413; The Pennsylvania Claimants to the Pennsylvania Commissioners, April 17, 1783, *Ibid.*, 276; The Pennsylvania Claimants to the Pennsylvania Commissioners, April 22, 1783, *Ibid.*, 282-283.

<sup>17</sup> Repeal of the Act Staying Suits of Ejectment Against Conn. Settlers, September 9, 1783, *SCP* 7:305 n. 3; Obadiah Gore to William Judd, November 21, 1783, *Ibid.*, 331.

The face-to-face politics of the revolutionary frontier overwhelmed government authority in the Wyoming Valley. Local officials appointed by the state did not remain impartial but became embroiled in interpersonal conflicts and local land disputes. Wyoming's magistrates helped to reinforce Yankees' opposition to state rule by using their powers to confiscate Connecticut claimants' property. Yankees believed that Patterson, Seely, and Mead had been "pointed out as tools" by Pennsylvania for their dispossession. Future events bore out these fears: the civil and military authorities appointed by the state did use their powers to gain advantage over Yankees in property disputes. Even David Mead had to admit that John Seely became too deeply involved in efforts to illegally eject Yankee settlers to be an effective justice of the peace. Nothing better symbolized Seely's blatant corruption and aggressive acquisitiveness than the fact that he resided on a farm forcibly taken from a Connecticut claimant.<sup>18</sup> Like John Seely, most of the local officials who presided over the Wyoming region supported Pennamite interests. Magistrates Alexander Patterson, David Mead, John Seely, and Henry Shoemaker all claimed land in the valley under Pennsylvania.<sup>19</sup> Christopher Hurlbut, a Connecticut claimant who kept a journal describing the troubles of 1783-84, characterized the men Pennsylvania appointed to extend its rule over the Wyoming region. Hurlbut considered Patterson "a man of considerable abilities, but bold, daring and completely unprincipled." He described David Mead as "insinuating, plausible and flattering" and accused him of covering his enmity toward Yankees with "pretended friendship." Hurlbut saved his most damning words for

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<sup>18</sup> Obadiah Gore to William Judd, November 21, 1783, *SCP* 7:331; John Franklin to the Governor of Connecticut, May 10, 1784, *Ibid.*, 419; David Mead to John Dickinson, October 22, 1784, *SCP* 8:128.

<sup>19</sup> Oscar Jewell Harvey and Ernst G. Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania*, 6 vols. (Wilkes-Barre, 1927), 3:1326-1327; John Franklin to the Governor of Connecticut, May 10, 1784, *SCP* 7:414-415, 419.

John Seely, who he judged had just enough sense "to act out the villian without disguise."<sup>20</sup>

Alexander Patterson, who became the undisputed leader of Pennamite settlers, exemplified how backcountry face-to-face struggles over land and local power undermined state authority. A native of Ireland, Patterson immigrated to Pennsylvania in the 1760s, purchased land in the Wyoming Valley, and soon came into conflict with Connecticut claimants. Patterson participated in the First Pennamite-Yankee War and supported Plunket's expedition in 1775 by attacking Yankee settlements along the Delaware. After serving as a Continental Army captain during the Revolution, Patterson turned his attentions back to Wyoming. More than anyone else, Patterson polarized the region--even the name of the valley's most important settlement became contested. Upon his arrival as a Pennsylvania magistrate late in 1783, Patterson snubbed Yankee residents and commemorated his Scots-Irish heritage by changing the name of Wilkes-Barre to "Londonderry."<sup>21</sup> Patterson and his associates used their authority to harass and intimidate Yankee settlers. Robert McDowel's experiences illustrate how justice became another casualty of the region's property disputes and power struggles. In October 1783, Constable Elisha Cortright, a Pennamite settler, arrested McDowel and took him before justice Seely to answer complaints made against him by Pennsylvania claimants. Seely ordered McDowel confined and then had him taken to the county jail at Sunbury. After two days in jail, McDowel returned to Wilkes-Barre but soon found himself in jail upon the orders of Alexander Patterson. McDowel again gained his freedom after Northumberland County Sheriff Henry Antes challenged the arrest. Soon after his run-in

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<sup>20</sup> Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1344; Hurlbut quoted in *Ibid.*, 1391.

<sup>21</sup> Oscar Jewell Harvey, *A History of Wilkes-Barre*, 6 vols. (Wilkes-Barre: 1909), 2:626, 669-671; Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1326-1327; James R. Williamson and Linda A. Fossler, *Zebulon Butler: Hero of the Revolutionary Frontier* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1995) 18, 38; Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1344.



with Seely and Patterson, Robert McDowel came face to face with the latter at a tavern in Salem township. When Patterson noticed that McDowel had entered the tavern, he tauntingly asked him, "will you sit in company with a tinker." McDowel replied, "a body will do anything at times." At this, Patterson rose in a rage and called McDowel a "rascal." He then knocked off McDowel's hat, struck him twice on the head, and shoved him out of the tavern.<sup>22</sup>

Pennamites further undercut the state's ability to control events along the northeast frontier by gaining the cooperation of the officers who commanded Wilkes-Barre's garrison. Major James Moore, Captains James Christy and Philip Shrawder, and Lieutenants Blackall William Ball, Andrew Henderson, Samuel Reed, and John Armstrong commanded the two companies of state troops who came to the valley in the fall of 1783.<sup>23</sup> Captain Christy, the garrison's acting commander, not only provided Patterson and his followers with the armed force he needed to intimidate Yankees but came up with his own methods of vexing Connecticut claimants. Instead of finding room for his men in the fort or Wilkes-Barre's public buildings, he billeted his troops in Yankee households. Christy singled out Zebulon Butler by crowding his home with a score of soldiers. In addition, state troops made a general nuisance of themselves by throwing Yankees in jail, assaulting them in the streets of Wilkes-Barre, tearing down their fences, and killing their livestock.<sup>24</sup>

Alexander Patterson also used his political influence and his powers as head agent of the Pennsylvania Land Claimants' Association to steal Yankees' land. He was able to combine the threat of legal prosecution with the prospect of holding land under secure Pennsylvania

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<sup>22</sup> Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1352-1353.

<sup>23</sup> Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1345-1347, 1351; Extract of the Minutes of the Pennsylvania Council, September 25, 1783, *SCP* 7:306-307.

<sup>24</sup> Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1351; Zebulon Butler to James Christy, October 22, 1783, *SCP* 7:310; Petition of Zebulon Butler and Others to the Continental Congress, May 1, 1784, *Ibid.*, 401-405.

titles and cajoled weak-willed Yankees into lease agreements with Pennsylvania landholders for lands they had purchased from the Susquehannah Company. Settlers who resisted this offer or failed to pay their rent experienced legal harassment and physical intimidation at the hands of Pennamites. Furthermore, Patterson's activities as a land agent cemented his alliance with the state troops at Wilkes-Barre. Instead of maintaining order, the garrison's officers enmeshed themselves in a Pennamite land grab. Patterson issued sizable land warrants to Major James Moore, Lieutenant Andrew Henderson, and other officers on July 1, 1784. On this and other occasions, Patterson forged an allegiance between himself and other local officials by offering them land claimed by Yankees.<sup>25</sup>

The campaign of harassment, intimidation, and false arrest orchestrated by Alexander Patterson aimed at a single goal: forcing Yankees off their land so that Pennamite settlers could occupy their farms and Pennsylvania landholders could reap profits generated by the sale of backcountry lands. Dispossession formed a visible subtext to the activities of Wyoming's Pennamite justices. Benjamin Harvey, upon returning from Wilkes-Barre after being imprisoned there under false pretenses, found that his home had been occupied by a Pennamite family. Likewise, soldiers placed Samuel Ransom under arrest in the fall of 1783 and took advantage of his absence to eject Ransom's family.<sup>26</sup>

Yankees, like Pennamites, rejected Pennsylvania's authority when it interfered with their goals but used state power when it served local needs. For instance, John Swift and Lawrence Meyers, two Yankees stalwarts, obtained appointments as deputy sheriffs from Northumberland County Sheriff Henry Antes. Like their Pennamite counterparts, these two Yankees used their power to harass their opponents. Garret Shoemaker, a Pennsylvania claimant, testified that in June 1784, Yankee settlers took him prisoner and

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<sup>25</sup> Alexander Patterson to John Dickinson, April 29, 1784, in Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1377-78; *Ibid.*, 1355, 1392.

<sup>26</sup> Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1354. For more examples of Yankees being arrested and dispossessed see *Ibid.*, 1352.

brought him before John Swift and Lawrence Meyers. Instead of upholding the law, the deputies joined their Yankee counterparts, flogged Shoemaker with "their iron Ramrods," and "knock'd him down with their Guns." The beating cost Shoemaker a pair of broken thumbs and two broken ribs.<sup>27</sup> That same summer, Pennsylvania authorized dispossessed Connecticut claimants to reoccupy their lands even before possession disputes had been settled in court. The New Englanders used the new law as a weapon against Pennamite settlers, ejecting Pennsylvania claimants who had taken lands by force as well as those who had occupied lands without displacing Yankees. Even as they paid lip service to Pennsylvania's laws, Connecticut claimants sought to undermine the state's authority and soil rights.<sup>28</sup>

Contention over local authority and land lay at the root of the power struggles that troubled the revolutionary frontier. Alexander Patterson, one of the leading figures in the disturbances that plagued the Wyoming region, illustrates why the struggles over property undermined the ability of government to guarantee peace and order. In a letter to the state's supreme court, Patterson admitted that many of the measures he took against Connecticut claimants were "not strictly consonant with the Letter of the Law," but defended his actions by stating that they had been "dictated solely by the principles of self preservation." Like Patterson, Pennamites and Yankees acted with reference to their own interests, placing the protection of their property rights before peace or loyalty to the state.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Deposition of Garret Shoemaker, August 10, 1784, *PA* 10:643.

<sup>28</sup> Deposition of Thomas Brink, August 12, 1784, *PA* 10:649; Deposition of Barnabas Cary, August 14, 1784, *Ibid.*, 651; Deposition of John Tillbury, January 14, 1785, *SCP* 8:196-197.

<sup>29</sup> Alexander Patterson to Thomas McKean and Other Judges of the Supreme Court, May 30, 1784, *SCP* 7:427-428; Alexander Patterson to John Dickinson, May 15, 1784, in Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1382.

The struggle for property and power in the Wyoming Valley cannot be solely attributed to the ambition of Patterson and his cronies. The Second Pennamite-Yankee War arose out of social tensions common to the revolutionary frontier. In particular, frontier families' determination to achieve and defend their material security and independence--what Alexander Patterson referred to as the "principles of self preservation"--shaped the character of unrest in northeast Pennsylvania.

### **"a great Many Wrangling Disputes"**

After the Revolution, Pennsylvania's backcountry disturbances changed from a conflict that involved a jurisdictional dispute between states to one that featured quarrels between settlers over land and the means of subsistence. After the Trenton Decree, Wyoming became the scene of bitter disputes over land, homes, crops, and livestock. Legal formalities and court rulings had little real meaning for settlers who had experienced the brutality of frontier warfare during the Revolution and encountered daily hardships as they eked out an existence in a region beset by scarcity and insecurity.

The violence that beset the Wyoming Valley did not just grow out of competition between formal and informal authority or ethnic friction between Yankee and Pennamite settlers. It also grew out of the willingness of ordinary yeoman farmers to use force to secure the land and crops they needed to maintain their families and guarantee their independence. The violence that accompanied the Second Pennamite-Yankee War mirrored a tension that existed beneath the surface of rural communities throughout early America. This tension was the anxiety produced by rural households' attempts to gain material security and avoid debt and dependency. In a world of limited resources and a growing population, the pursuit of household independence inevitably led to friction

between farming families. Conflict was particularly intense in regions, like Wyoming, where resources were scarce and where property rights were in dispute.<sup>30</sup>

The Wyoming dispute became bound up in the struggle for competency along the revolutionary frontier. This competition for land and resources, which was already pronounced in backcountry regions marked by poverty and underdevelopment, became even more contentious because of the social and economic dislocation caused by the Revolution. Captain Thomas Robinson, who commanded one of the two ranger companies sent to Wyoming in 1783, touched upon this feature of the region's agrarian discord when he noted that the valley's inhabitants became involved in "a great Many Wrangling Disputes." Robinson attributed this state of affairs to settlers' "pelfering" and "Letegious Spirit." These attitudes were not unique to Wyoming's inhabitants but also marked the behavior of early American families who sought every advantage in their efforts to achieve independence.<sup>31</sup>

Settlers' revolutionary experience provided a backdrop for the competition over resources that marked the Second Pennamite-Yankee War. This is not to say that the Revolution did not influence the Wyoming dispute; however, Pennamites and Yankees drew upon a revolutionary legacy not of liberty and equality but of destruction and violence. Immediately following the war, Wyoming's inhabitants faced the difficult task of reoccupying a frontier wasted by years of conflict.<sup>32</sup> In November 1784, Griffith Evans

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<sup>30</sup> Two works that touch upon the centrality of household and kin networks to guaranteeing peace and stability in agrarian society are Daniel Vickers, "Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America," *WMQ* 47 (January 1990): 4, 23, 28-29; and Christopher M. Jedry, *The World of John Cleaveland: Family and Community in Eighteenth-Century New England* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1979), 70.

<sup>31</sup> Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1338.

<sup>32</sup> Gregory T. Knouff, "'An Arduous Service': The Pennsylvania Backcountry Soldiers' Revolution," *Pennsylvania History* 61 (January 1994): 62, 70. For a description of the destruction wrought upon the Upper Susquehanna River Valley during the Revolution, see chapter 6, "The War in the Valley," in Peter C. Mancall, *Valley of Opportunity*:

journeyed down the Susquehanna after representing Pennsylvania at treaty negotiations with the Iroquois at Fort Stanwix, New York. Along the way, he recorded scenes of destruction and poverty he came across in the Wyoming Valley. Evans noted that the region had been settled before the Revolution but that Indians had driven off its inhabitants and destroyed their farms during the war. He observed that Wilkes-Barre lay on a "beautiful rich plane" but had "suffered from every quarter" during the Revolution and had "been little improved" since then.<sup>33</sup>

Memories of death and loss shadowed the Yankee settlers who reclaimed the Wyoming Valley after the war. Raw numbers can do little to capture the emotional cost of warfare, but they do suggest the material dimension of the setbacks experienced by Wyoming's inhabitants. In 1777, Connecticut rated Westmoreland County's taxable estates at £20,322. In 1780, two years after the disastrous Battle of Wyoming, officials valued county assets at £2,353--a little more than a tenth of the county's value three years earlier. Likewise, a few months before the Battle of Wyoming, Westmoreland County contained 515 taxable inhabitants. In 1780, after hundreds of settlers had been killed or fled, only about a hundred taxables remained. By 1781 this situation had improved slightly (the county contained about 150 taxable males who possessed property worth approximately £4,500), but the county's population and wealth remained far below their pre-revolutionary levels.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the losses sustained by Connecticut claimants dwarfed the value of their remaining property. Westmoreland officials estimated that between July 1778 and May 1789 the county's inhabitants had suffered £38,308 in damages. Individual losses ranged

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*Economic Culture Along the Upper Susquehanna, 1700-1800* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991), 130-159.

<sup>33</sup> Hallock F. Raup, ed., "Journal of Griffith Evans, 1784-1788," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History & Biography* 65 (April 1941): 223-224 (hereafter cited as *PMHB*).

<sup>34</sup> Harvey, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 2:951-952; Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1254-1255, 1277-1279.

from £4 to £712 4s.<sup>35</sup> The material destruction wrought by America's war for independence, combined with the Revolution's legacy of violence, did much to rekindle agrarian unrest in the Wyoming Valley.

With much of the Wyoming Valley still in ruins from the war, housing, cleared fields, and any other improvements that aided survival along the frontier became items of contention between Pennamites and Yankees. Settlers fought for land not only because of its abstract value as an icon of agrarian independence, but also because it supported the crops, livestock, and timber they needed to secure their subsistence. Indeed, contention over such basic resources resulted in some of the bloodiest episodes of the Second Pennamite-Yankee War. In July 1784, competition over crops along the west side of the Susquehanna resulted in a deadly encounter when a Pennamite and a Yankee patrol collided. Two Pennsylvania claimants, Henry Brink and Wilhelmus Van Gordon, were wounded when Yankees "Raised the Indian Yell" and fired a volley. Two Connecticut claimants, Elisha Garret and Chester Paine, were killed when the Pennamites returned fire.<sup>36</sup>

During 1783-85 feuds between Pennamites and Yankees over land and resources took on all the trappings of a full-fledged frontier war. Four days after the skirmish in which Pennamites killed Garret and Paine, Benjamin Blanchard received a gunshot wound in the thigh. The following day, a rifle shot killed another Yankee settler. Later that month Pennamites shot John Franklin through the wrist and killed Nathan Stevens.<sup>37</sup> As Henry Brink's and Wilhelmus Van Gordon's brush with death testifies, Yankees were not the sole

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<sup>35</sup> Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1280-1282.

<sup>36</sup> Deposition of William Brink, July 27, 1784, *SCP* 8:7-8; Deposition of Henry Brink, August 15, 1784, *PA* 10:651; Deposition of Wilhelmus Van Gordon, August 15, 1784, *Ibid.*, 652; Deposition of Catherine Cortright, August 11, 1784, *Ibid.*, 642; John Franklin to William Samuel Johnson, Eliphalet Dyer, and Jesse Root, October 11, 1784, *SCP* 8:109-110.

<sup>37</sup> John Franklin's Diary, July 3-December 7, 1784, *SCP* 8:155-156.

victims of violence. In August 1784, killed one Pennsylvania militiamen and wounded three others in a skirmish that came to be known as the Battle of Locust Hill.<sup>38</sup> Late in September, Yankees shot and killed Lieutenants Andrew Henderson and Samuel Reed during a raid on Wilkes-Barre's garrison.<sup>39</sup> Finally, in October half-a-dozen Pennamites and Pennsylvania militiamen became casualties during an intense gun battle with Connecticut claimants near Abraham's Creek.<sup>40</sup> In July 1784, Connecticut claimants subjected Pennamites in Wilkes-Barre's fort to a nine-day siege. On October 19, a party of Pennamites "lying in ambush" along a road near Abraham's Creek wounded Jonathan Terry in the shoulder. Likewise, on October 28 and November 4 skirmishes took place between Yankees and Pennamites.<sup>41</sup> Settlers on both sides diverted labor away from clearing land and planting crops in order to garrison their forts, guard their fields, and send out scouting parties. This situation only made competition over existing improvements and provisions all the more intense.

The demands of frontier warfare may have diverted settlers from more peaceful pursuits, but this does not mean that the Wyoming dispute became divorced from the every-day aspects of frontier life. Pennamites and Yankees may have become impromptu backwoods soldiers but they remained at heart farmers who labored to make a living on the frontier. Indeed, Wyoming's settlers fought not for the jurisdictional rights of state governments or

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<sup>38</sup> Deposition of James Moore, September 14, 1784, *PA* 10:656-657; Deposition of John Stickafoos, September 24, 1784, *Ibid.*, 667-668; Deposition of Harmon Brink, September 22, 1784, *Ibid.*, 661.

<sup>39</sup> Alexander Patterson to John Armstrong, Jr., September 28, 1784, *SCP* 8:85; Deposition of Henry Shoemaker, September 28, 1784 in Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1438-1439.

<sup>40</sup> John Franklin to Frederick Antes, Daniel Montgomery, and William Bonam, October 23, 1784, *SCP* 8:130; John Armstrong, Jr., to John Dickinson, October 25, 1784, *Ibid.*, 135; Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1447.

<sup>41</sup> John Franklin's Diary, July 3-December 7, 1784, *SCP* 8:156, 158-159; John Franklin to Frederick Antes, October 23, 1784, *Ibid.*, 130-131; Deposition of John Armstrong, Jr., July 28, 1784, *PA* 10:623-624.



land companies, but over the very means of subsistence. For a time, conflict became the focus of life in northeast Pennsylvania but fights over power and property never became isolated from settlers' daily lives. On the contrary, agrarian aspirations and rural social networks shaped the conflict and gave it meaning.

Disputes over property and authority combined to produce bloody conflict. Captain Robinson again provides insight into why the Wyoming Valley became the scene of violence. He noted that many settlers, "Imajining no Law was to take Hold of them," plundered their neighbors and dispossessed them of their lands. Here, Robinson hit upon the element that converted competition over resources into frontier warfare--a lack of unified authority. This factor, in combination with the devastation of Pennsylvania's northeast frontier during the war for independence, made the Wyoming Valley a country of want and insecurity in which disputes over property and resources ignited violence. Material insecurity and a lack of effective authority transformed the valley into a more turbulent mirror-image of agrarian society. In the same way that litigation and contention coexisted with neighborliness in rural communities, intense factionalism rubbed elbows with mutuality along the frontier. However, along the revolutionary frontier law and authority fell victim to conflicts over land instead of resolving them.<sup>42</sup>

The Second Pennamite-Yankee War emerged not out of legal battles over abstract property rights, but out of a highly personalized fight for subsistence that pitted households and neighborhoods against one another. In September 1784, the state commissioners who sought to resolve land disputes in the Wyoming Valley, testified to how the immediate needs of frontier people, not legal questions of ownership, came to dominate contests over property. Commissioners John Okely, John Boyd, John

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<sup>42</sup> Captain Robinson to Governor Dickinson, June 8, 1783, in Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1338; Vickers, "Competency and Competition," 24-29.

Armstrong, and James Read reported their apprehension that fights over unharvested grain would spark a new round of armed conflict. They observed that disputes over crops often lay at the center of settler violence and added that finding ways to avoid such confrontations would go a long way toward keeping the peace.<sup>43</sup> Here the commissioners made an important distinction concerning Wyoming's property disputes: the source of conflict was not simply land but the food crops, livestock, and timber it supported.

A confrontation between Waterman Baldwin and Pennamite settler William Lantarman illustrates the relationship between competition over resources and violence in the Wyoming Valley. Baldwin caught Lantarman harvesting grain in a field claimed by Yankees and threatened to scalp him if he took any corn away. Seeing that Baldwin carried a rifle and two pistols, Lantarman asked if he would shoot him for taking corn. Baldwin answered that he would.<sup>44</sup> Under more normal circumstances, encounters between settlers would have revolved around exchanges of news, tools, and labor, but along the northeast frontier interpersonal relations commonly exhibited a darker side of rural life.<sup>45</sup>

Violent competition over land and resources increased as Pennamite settlers trickled into the Wyoming region after the Trenton Decree. Late in 1783 this stream of Pennsylvania land claimants turned into a flood when the Pennsylvania Assembly repealed the act that had stayed suits of ejectment against Connecticut claimants.<sup>46</sup> The problems caused by invading Pennamites came to the attention of Pennsylvania's legislature when a group of Connecticut claimants north of Wilkes-Barre tested the impartiality of the state by

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<sup>43</sup> Commissioners to President Dickinson, September 24, 1784, *PA* 10:664.

<sup>44</sup> Deposition of William Lantarman, September 22, 1784, *PA* 10:660-661.

<sup>45</sup> For another work that discusses a similar relationship between neighborliness and frontier conflict see Lucy Jayne Botscharow-Kamau, "Neighbors: Harmony & Conflict on the Indiana Frontier," *Journal of the Early Republic* 11 (Winter 1991): 507-529.

<sup>46</sup> Repeal of the Act Staying Suits of Ejectment Against Connecticut settlers, September 9, 1783, *SCP* 7:304-305.

petitioning them for redress. The Yankees explained that Daniel Whitney came to Jacob's Plains in the spring of 1783 after purchasing land there under a Pennsylvania title. Trouble arose in December when Whitney, encouraged by the repeal of the staying act, took the grain, hay, and livestock of several Yankee settlers "without any Cerimoney" and sold them at an unadvertised auction. Disputes over property, like the one that occurred between Daniel Whitney and the Connecticut claimants who occupied Jacob's Plains, increased over time and involved an ever-growing number of settlers.<sup>47</sup>

Disputes over resources led to dispossession campaigns during which hundreds of families found themselves without food or shelter. Pennsylvania never sanctioned the unlawful ejectment of settlers, yet backcountry inhabitants took matters into their own hands. In May 1784, Alexander Patterson, with the help of Wilkes-Barre's garrison of state troops, ejected over 150 Yankee families. Once they were out of the way, Pennsylvania claimants entered the valley and occupied their homes.<sup>48</sup> Yankees struck back in July when they embarked on a retaliatory campaign of removals. After about a year, Yankees had cleared most Pennamites from the region. One Pennsylvania claimant estimated that by 1785 Yankees had dispossessed over six hundred Pennamite men, women, and children.<sup>49</sup>

Besides outright dispossession, Yankees and Pennamites plundered each other's farms, leaving families stripped of provisions, tools, livestock, and other essentials of frontier life. In one instance, Henry Brink testified that Yankees "armed with Rifles & Pistolls" took

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<sup>47</sup> John Franklin to Roger Sherman, March 21, 1784, *SCP* 7:378-379; Petition of Abraham Westbrook and Others to the Pennsylvania General Assembly, February 12, 1784, *Ibid.*, 358-360.

<sup>48</sup> Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1380; John Franklin's Diary, May 2-July 3, 1784, *SCP* 7:436-437.

<sup>49</sup> Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1397-1398; Deposition of Mary Cooley, August 10, 1784, *PA* 10:641-642; Deposition of Hannah Schoonhover, August 10, 1784, *Ibid.*, 646; Deposition of Nathan Cary, November, 9, 1784, *Ibid.*, 693; Deposition of Preserved Cooley, January 14, 1785, *SCP* 8:198.

away 350 bushels of corn and two cows which belonged to him and his father. Once the Yankees had taken what they wanted, they ordered Brink to "quit the Country" and threatened that if he did not go "they would drive him before the Muzzle of their guns." In another episode of conflict over crops and livestock, Daniel Gore confronted Pennsylvania claimant Nichodemus Travis when he saw him loading his oats into a wagon. Gore, who held three stones in one hand and a club in the other, declared that he would "sacrifice" Travis if he did not leave his crops alone.<sup>50</sup> This particular confrontation grew out of conflicting claims to a field of oats, but settlers also fought over salt, flax, hay, and rye and robbed one another of rifles, shot, and powder.<sup>51</sup> These latter items became a focus of conflict because they all played key roles in maintaining frontier households. Without them, settlers could not expect to survive in contested backcountry regions like the Wyoming Valley.

The experience of Enos Randal, a Pennamite settler, epitomized how conflict over scarce resources shaped the Second Pennamite-Yankee War. Randal had his house "torn down," his crops stolen, and his cattle "destroyed" by a Yankee mob. Afterwards, he went to the New Englanders and begged for "a little of his corn for the subsistence of a numerous family thro' the winter." The Yankees denied him any support, saying that "they would want it all the next summer for the supply of the Troops."<sup>52</sup> It is important to note that rioters most often laid waste only to what they could not take for their own use. Settler mobs did not seek to simply destroy property; rather, they attempted to gather the provisions and resources needed to maintain themselves while denying the same to their

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<sup>50</sup> Deposition of Henry Brink, January 14, 1785, *SCP* 8:200; Deposition of Nicodemus Travis, September 22, 1784, *PA* 10:662.

<sup>51</sup> For other confrontations over resources see the Deposition of William Miller, January 14, 1785, *SCP* 8:198-199; and the Deposition of Charles Manrow, March 24, 1785, *PA* 10:708. For an example of gun theft see the Deposition of Abraham Gooden, August 11, 1784, *Ibid.*, 639.

<sup>52</sup> Deposition of Enos Randal, January 14, 1785, *SCP* 8:199.

opponents. Seeing that the state lacked the means to police its frontier or impose its laws upon dissenting settlers, Wyoming's inhabitants developed tactics that revolved not around litigation but the much more immediate objective of securing their subsistence.

The struggle for subsistence that beset the Wyoming Valley also involved women and children.<sup>53</sup> Griffith Evans' chronicle of his journey down the Susquehanna River provides insights into how families became involved in the Wyoming dispute. Evans and his companions stopped at a cabin near the juncture of the Susquehanna and Lackawanna rivers to ask directions. He described the women who occupied the house as "amazing warm yankees and inveterate to an extreme against the Pennamites." Clearly, partisanship and factionalism could not be claimed as the exclusive property of men. Indeed, these Yankee women caused "some high scenes" for reasons Evans never made clear; perhaps the women's prejudice against Pennsylvania made tempers flare when they learned of Evans' connections to the state. Women and children often became the victims of conflicts over property. Evans noted that he "saw much distress" among the inhabitants of the Wyoming Valley. In particular, the spectacle of "large families of women and young children flying . . . to unimproved wilds" impressed itself upon his memory. These observations serve as a reminder that agrarian unrest in the Wyoming region revolved around efforts to defend or destroy the ability of frontier households to sustain themselves. Evans encountered refugees without "a house to receive them nor [a] single atom to support them."<sup>54</sup>

Women became involved in the Wyoming dispute because contests over property touched upon their daily lives. Society may have recognized adult men as household

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<sup>53</sup> Daniel Vickers, "Competency and Competition," 12, 23; Charles Desmond Dutrizac, "Local Identity and Authority in a Disputed Hinterland: The Pennsylvania-Maryland Border in the 1730s" *PMHB* 105 (January 1991): 57.

<sup>54</sup> Raup, "Journal of Griffith Evans," 223-224.

leaders, but farming families required the cooperation of husbands, wives, and children to make ends meet. Indeed, frontier households depended upon the combined efforts of men and women to survive and prosper. In early America, women retained responsibility for domestic production: they spun thread, wove cloth, and made numerous other household goods both for home consumption and trade. In addition, women also cared for the gardens that lay close to their homes, tended to the feeding of chickens and pigs, milked cows, and saw to the production of butter and cheese.<sup>55</sup> Both Pennamites and Yankees plundered opposing households' domestic goods, uprooted their gardens, stole their livestock, and tore down fences that enclosed the yards surrounding their cabins. In short, agrarian violence disrupted the household economy, which involved the productive labors of men, women, and children.

Instead of remaining on the fringes of backcountry conflict, women in northeastern Pennsylvania often found themselves on the front lines of Pennamite-Yankee enmity. Women's domestic responsibilities put them at odds with bands of male settlers who sought to rob families of their food, homes, and animals. Catherine Sims's description of her dispossession by Yankee settlers reveals how backcountry conflict touched one woman's life. Sims, in contrast to men's concerns with grain crops, oxen, and horses, specifically mentioned her fight with three Yankees over her family's pair of milk cows. She also took care to record how her assailants "plundered" her household goods and "destroyed" her garden before forcing her to take refuge in a Pennamite fort at Wilkes-Barre. Lois King, another Pennamite woman, drew a distinction between property that belonged to her husband and property that belonged to her. In describing her ejection,

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<sup>55</sup> For an exploration of women's activities in rural households during the colonial and early national periods see: Laruel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991) and Idem., "Martha Ballard and Her Girls: Women's Work in Eighteenth-Century Maine," in Stephen Innes, ed., *Work and Labor in Early America* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1988), 70-105.

King distinguished between Yankees tearing off the roof of "her husband's house" and their plundering her domestic possessions. On another occasion, a band of Pennsylvania claimants "forcibly" dispossessed Abigail Jameson, her mother-in-law, and daughters of their home and domestic goods.<sup>56</sup>

Women often kept possession of homesteads and dealt with riotous mobs long after their husbands or fathers had fled. In a region beset by bloodshed and murder, male settlers often left their wives and daughters the difficult task of holding property against marauding frontiersmen. After Yankee rioters threatened to "make a corpse" of him, Charles Manrow "not thinking himself safe to stay in his house left it, and his family in it."<sup>57</sup> While men risked severe beatings or even death if they attempted to protect their farms, women were able to maintain possession without running the same level of risk. Hannah Schoonhover's description of her encounter with a band of Yankee rioters led by Waterman Baldwin makes clear the fine line Wyoming's women tread between resistance and accommodation. Hannah recounted how she and her sister-in-law barred the door of their cabin when they saw the Yankees approaching. Baldwin, wishing to know what level of resistance he could expect to meet, asked Hannah "if there was any men in the house." After Hannah replied that there were not, Baldwin proceeded to break down the door and plunder her house. Next, they ordered Hannah to join her husband at Wilkes-Barre's fort. When she refused to move, the Yankees told her that she would "be abus'd" if she did not. In the end, Hannah Schoonhover lost her family's property but managed to escape her encounter alive and unharmed.<sup>58</sup>

But women also fell victim to the violence that claimed the lives of their husbands, fathers, and brothers. For instance, John Franklin claimed that a party of Pennsylvania

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<sup>56</sup> John Franklin to the Governor of Connecticut, May 10, 1784, *SCP* 7:419; Deposition of Catherine Sims, August 10, 1784, *PA* 10:644-645; Deposition of Abigail Jameson, October 29, 1784, *Ibid.*, 688-689.

<sup>57</sup> Deposition of Charles Manrow, August 11, 1784, *PA* 10:634.

<sup>58</sup> Deposition of Hannah Schoonhover, August 10, 1784, *PA* 10:646.

claimants "beat and abused" two Yankee women "in a shameful disgraceful and cruel manner" and that Pennsylvania militiamen "attempted to ravish" two more Yankee women who lived near the Lackawanna River. It is not so surprising that in a region beset by conflicts over power and property that men raped women. Sexual assault became just another tool of violence to be used against the persons and property of opponents. Moreover, male settlers embroiled in an aggressive struggle over land and authority may have used rape as a way of expressing their masculinity and power. Franklin finished his chronicle of violence perpetrated against women by noting that a Pennamite musket ball cut Mrs. Stephen Gardiner's hair and grazed the head of a baby she held in her arms. Pennsylvania claimants were not alone in their willingness to abuse women. Elizabeth Van Norman testified that Yankees went to a leading Connecticut claimant, John Swift, to obtain permission to shoot women and children. Three days later, Yankees fired eight times at her when she went to fetch a pail of water. On another occasion, Lois King reported that Waterman Baldwin shot her dog as it walked by her side; King believed that he meant the bullet for her.<sup>59</sup>

During the Second Pennamite-Yankee War, agrarian conflict became closely intertwined with daily life in the backcountry. The Wyoming dispute was no longer a contest between states but between backcountry families who fought and died to secure land, crops, and other means of subsistence. After the Trenton Decree, this struggle for competency became a dominant feature of the Wyoming dispute. Moreover, coalitions of backcountry households and neighborhoods emerged as the real power along the northeast frontier. By the mid-1780s Yankee settlers had transformed face-to-face loyalties rooted in kin and neighborhood networks into an effective frontier insurgency that overwhelmed their Pennamite opponents.

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<sup>59</sup> John Franklin to Frederick Antes, Daniel Montgomery, and William Bonam, October 23, 1784, *SCP* 8:131, 132; Deposition of Elizabeth Van Norman, August 11, 1784, *PA* 10:643; Deposition of Lois King, August 10, 1784, *Ibid.*, 645.



### **Lines of Allegiance**

A complex landscape of allegiance emerged in the Wyoming Valley after the Trenton Decree. Like authority and property, the loyalty of settlers became an object of contention. This struggle demonstrates that settlers based their allegiance upon a close observation of how their choices would effect their ability to secure land and attain independence. Instead of focusing on obligations to outside authorities, Pennamites and Yankees looked to their own interests and goals. This reality set the stage for the complex, ever-shifting alliances that characterized factionalism in the Wyoming region. However, studying patterns of allegiance in the Wyoming Valley also reveals that factionalism was not tied only to disputes over land. Indeed, kinship, neighborhood networks, and other face-to-face relationships framed factionalism on the northeast frontier.<sup>60</sup>

This battle for allegiance shows that localism proved a stronger basis for unity than loyalty to formal authorities beyond the frontier. Indeed, Wyoming's Yankees emerged victorious from the Second Pennamite-Yankee War because they effectively used local social networks to mobilize support. Pennamites never developed the same level of internal solidarity. More important, the ties that Pennsylvania claimants maintained with the state ended up being more of a hindrance than a help in their bid for property and power. Along the revolutionary frontier, informal authority exercised at the local level often proved more stable and strong than government power.

Pennamites and Yankees did not form static factions but permeable, changing coalitions based on ties of family, kinship, and friendship. Wyoming's inhabitants took a flexible approach toward their struggle for property, maneuvering among factions and switching

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<sup>60</sup> Family and ethnicity played a similar role in structuring settler allegiance along the Pennsylvania-Maryland border in the 1730s. See Dutirzac, "Local Identity and Authority," 55-56.

sides in order to gain advantage. For example, Preserved Cooley, John Borlen, John and Jacob Tillbury, Obadiah Walker, and Isaac Van Norman fought alongside Connecticut claimants and protected Yankee settlements during the revolutionary war, but later abandoned their former comrades and joined the Pennamite faction after the Trenton Decree. Obadiah Walker's change of heart appears all the more striking when compared to the fact that he had signed a pro-Yankee petition that demanded that Connecticut claimants serving in the Continental Army be allowed to remain in the valley in order to protect their families from Tories, Indians, and Pennamites.<sup>61</sup>

Preserved Cooley not only relinquished his ties to Connecticut claimants after the Trenton Decree, but became a prominent and aggressive Pennamite. The timing of Cooley's defection is important to understanding his actions. In the spring of 1783, Preserved Cooley's name appeared on a list of Connecticut claimants residing in the valley; however, that same spring, Pennsylvania listed him among those settlers it considered loyal to the state.<sup>62</sup> Cooley was able to maintain this dual identity as long as the state promoted reconciliation with Yankee settlers. Before the fall of 1783, Wyoming's Yankees could retain their Susquehannah Company titles without endangering their relations with the state. However, after negotiations collapsed and Pennsylvania began to equate the possession of a Connecticut title with dissent, Yankees had to decide between their loyalty to their neighbors and their loyalty to the government. Preserved Cooley decided that betraying Connecticut claimants held fewer risks than opposing the power of Pennsylvania

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<sup>61</sup> Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1416; Harvey, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 2:980-981, 1096, 1229-1230; Petition of Westmoreland Militia, January 23, 1781, *SCP* 7:79-80.

<sup>62</sup> A List of Wyoming Settlers Divided According to Political Outlook, April, 1783, *SCP* 7:290-291; Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1332-1333; Petition of Dissident from the Inhabitants of Wyoming, December 29, 1783, *SCP* 7:340-342; Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1416.

and abandoned the Yankee cause. Like many others, Cooley threw in his lot with the Pennamites when it seemed that the tide had turned against the Connecticut claim.

Preserved Cooley's behavior reflects a larger trend: settler allegiance, fluid immediately following the Trenton Decree, became more structured and stable by the close of 1783. Indecision characterized many frontier inhabitants in months following Pennsylvania's takeover of the Wyoming Valley. Some, believing that Pennsylvania's jurisdictional victory undermined Connecticut titles, purchased or leased land from Pennsylvania claimants while others sought lands in New York or in western Pennsylvania.<sup>63</sup> Factional lines solidified with the collapse of settler-state negotiations in the spring of 1783. Pennsylvania claimants who entered the valley, along with Connecticut claimants who had purchased or leased land under Pennsylvania, coalesced into Wyoming's Pennamite faction. On the other side, Connecticut claimants who remained opposed to Pennsylvania closed ranks and braced themselves for conflict. The outbreak of open conflict between Pennamites and Yankees in the fall further reduced settlers' ability to move back and forth between factions.

Ethnicity and provincial background (whether or not one was from New England or Pennsylvania) influenced patterns of allegiance along the frontier, but neighborhood networks, ties of kinship, and other intimate social relationships provided the glue that held settler factions together. Unrest in the Wyoming Valley grew not so much out of conflict between poor frontier farmers and wealthy land speculators as out of disputes between backcountry inhabitants who were quite similar in terms of their economic and social status. Moreover, differing religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds helped to shape Yankee and Pennamite factions but did not determine allegiance. Most Yankees were New Englanders by birth, British in background, and Congregationalists in faith. In

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<sup>63</sup> Connecticut Settlers' Agreement, February 12, 1783, *SCP* 7:261-265; Petition of Obadiah Gore to the New York Legislature, March 10, 1783, *Ibid.*, 269-270.

contrast, most Pennamites came from the Middle Colonies with their mix of ethnic groups and religious sects. However, these differences did not simply translate into factional divisions as settlers from New England joined the Pennsylvania claimants and native Pennsylvanians remained loyal to the Connecticut claim.<sup>64</sup>

Face-to-face social networks became intertwined in the Wyoming Valley's politics of allegiance; in fact, the Second Pennamite-Yankee War was more of a feud between two coalitions of kin and neighbors than a territorial conflict between Pennsylvania and rebellious New Englanders. Loyalty to Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and the Susquehannah Company often took a back seat to efforts to secure property, yet the struggle for land remained subservient to settlers' devotion to their families, kin, and close neighbors. The contention that beset the Wyoming Valley divided frontiersmen from government and commonly created friction between neighbors but it did not divide families. Extensive kin networks, not just single households, grouped together under a single banner. The Inmans, Slocurns, and Satterlees were some of the families who formed the backbone of Wyoming's Yankee faction. On the other hand, the Shoemakers, Brinks, Van Normans, Cortrights, and Tillburys congregated together as Pennamites. Local social networks not only survived the second Pennamite-Yankee war but served as a vital framework of settler loyalty.

Yankees regained control of the Wyoming Valley in the winter of 1784. Connecticut claimants emerged victorious from the Second Pennamite-Yankee War because they effectively used kinship and neighborhood networks to mobilize themselves and because they remained united in their commitment to local autonomy. In contrast, Pennamites lost

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<sup>64</sup> The relationship between class, small-scale social networks, and agrarian discord is also discussed in Edward Countryman, "'Out of the Bounds of the Law': Northern Land Rioters in the Eighteenth Century" in Alfred F. Young, ed., *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Univ. Press, 1976), 50-52; and in Dutrizac, "Local Identity and Authority," 55-57.

their hold on the Wyoming Valley because they remained partially dependent upon state power and the influence of the Pennsylvania Land Claimants Association. In the end, Pennsylvania claimants discovered that state authority and the efforts of men like Alexander Patterson could not overcome Yankee localism. Worse still, Pennamites found that their ties to the government did not always serve to further their interests in the Wyoming Valley.

How the Yankees came out on top can be understood by examining how they, and the Pennamites who opposed them, maintained cohesion. Both factions depended on ties of kinship and neighborhood to preserve their strength and unity. However, subtle but significant differences separated Pennamites from Yankees. Connecticut claimants had stronger ties to the Wyoming region than did the majority of Pennsylvania claimants. Both groups included settlers who had lived in the valley for more than a decade or who maintained strong ties of kinship in the region, yet these traits characterized Yankees more than Pennamites. Many Pennsylvania claimants arrived in the Wyoming region after 1783 to occupy dormant land claims or to take up residence on the farms of dispossessed Connecticut claimants. In contrast, the vast majority of Yankees who participated in the Second Pennamite-Yankee War had either lived in the Wyoming region since before the Revolution or had close relations who did.<sup>65</sup> Strong emotional ties bound Connecticut claimants to the Wyoming Valley: Pennamite fought for land but Yankees fought for their homes. This reality inspired Connecticut claimants and gave them a determination to persevere that their Pennamite adversaries could not match.

More than the rank and file of Wyoming's settler factions, the men who led Pennamites and Yankees illustrate how the two sides differed and why these differences benefitted Connecticut claimants. Strong local commitments helped leading Yankees to sustain their

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<sup>65</sup> Harvey, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 2:951-952; Depositions of John Tillbury, Lena Tillbury, William Miller, Enos Randal, and Henry Brink, January 14, 1785, *SCP* 8:195, 198-200.

resistance and made them powerful adversaries. John Swift, John Franklin, John Jenkins, and William Slocum labored to establish Yankee settlements along the frontier, fought to defend them during the Revolution, and reaffirmed their commitment to the Connecticut claim during the region's post-revolutionary troubles. In contrast, Alexander Patterson, John Seely, David Mead, and other leading Pennamites came to the valley to acquire property, not to protect kin, neighbors, and homes. This difference in motivation is what kept Yankee leaders fighting after suffering the sort of setbacks that sapped the resolve of leading Pennamites.

No one better illustrates the shortcomings of Pennamite leadership and the underpinnings of settler loyalty than David Mead. Mead, a native of Hudson, New York, first came to the Wyoming Valley in 1769 when the Susquehannah Company engaged him to help survey its townships. He obtained land in return for his services but left the Wyoming region upon the outbreak of the First Pennamite-Yankee War. He returned to the valley in 1773 but again abandoned Yankee settlers when, with the outbreak of the revolutionary war, he decided to move to the relative safety of Sunbury. Ever the opportunist, Mead switched his loyalty to Pennsylvania and in 1783 came back to the Wyoming Valley as a justice of the peace. Like other Wyoming magistrates, he used his office to take advantage of Yankee settlers.<sup>66</sup>

Mead continued his double-dealing behavior during the Second Pennamite-Yankee War. Throughout the conflict, his allegiance and loyalty belonged to whichever side seemed the stronger. Zebulon Butler described Mead as the "fullest Aggressor and Distressor of the widow and fatherless Orphans" during the Pennamites' dispossession campaigns of 1783 and 1784. Butler based his assessment on personal experience. In January 1784, Mead and his family took residence in Zebulon Butler's house, leaving the aged Yankee leader and

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<sup>66</sup> Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1463.

his wife only a single room.<sup>67</sup> Mead did not limit his injustice to Butler. Connecticut Claimants who sought justice from him met with abuse and beatings instead of redress.<sup>68</sup> When Pennamite fortunes began to decline, Mead turned against his old allies and sought to patch his relations with the region's Yankee settlers. During the winter of 1784-1785, Pennamites experienced Mead's injustice. Henry Brink, Obadiah Walker, and Joseph Montawney all testified to David Mead's unwillingness to enforce Pennsylvania's laws as Yankee power waxed in the Wyoming region. Obadiah Walker complained that Connecticut claimants took his rifle, then dragged him before Mead and accused him of stealing the gun. Mead demanded that Walker return the rifle which, as a matter of fact, had been awarded to him by a Pennsylvania magistrate earlier in the year. Here and elsewhere, Mead opposed state authority and appeased Yankee rioters in order to maintain his influence.<sup>69</sup>

The shortcomings of Pennamite solidarity and leadership were not the only factors working in the favor of Yankees: ironically, Pennsylvania's intervention in the Wyoming dispute worked to the advantage of Connecticut claimants. Pennamites' disobedience to the state and the self-serving activities of Pennsylvania justices friendly to Pennamite interests raised the ire of officials in Philadelphia and at Northumberland County's county seat, Sunbury. Ultimately, the state responded to Pennamites' usurpation of state authority by removing prominent Pennsylvania claimants from office and by prosecuting others for breaches of the peace.

The fact that Pennamite excesses had raised eyebrows among more fair-minded state officials contributed to the government's growing disillusionment with the men it had

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<sup>67</sup> Zebulon Butler to John Bayard, May 9, 1785, *SCP* 8:234; Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1355; Zebulon Butler to Daniel Montgomery, January 6, 1784, *SCP* 7:343.

<sup>68</sup> John Franklin to the Governor of Connecticut, May 10, 1784, *SCP* 7:419-420.

<sup>69</sup> Deposition of Henry Brink, January 14, 1785, *SCP* 7:200; Depositions of Obadiah Walker and Joseph Montawney, January 14, 1785, *SCP* 8:192-193.

entrusted to maintain order in the Wyoming Valley. In April 1784, Governor Dickinson ordered the state troops who garrisoned Wilkes-Barre to disband and leave the valley by the first of June.<sup>70</sup> Alexander Patterson worked his way around this setback by hiring on many of the garrison's officers and soldiers after their dismissal, thus maintaining the armed force he needed to stay in power. By the spring of 1784, cooperation between Pennamites and the state had been replaced by mutual mistrust. In addition, long-standing enmity between Northumberland County Sheriff Frederick Antes and Alexander Patterson came out into the open. Whether based on personal reasons or moral opposition to the abuse of power, Antes became Patterson's nemesis. On several occasions in the past, the sheriff had foiled attempts to illegally eject and imprison Yankee settlers. For example, in October 1783, Antes released Zebulon Butler after Patterson, Seely, and Mead had sent him to Sunbury under a trumped-up charge of treason.<sup>71</sup> Likewise, officials in Philadelphia did not forever remain in the dark about the impartial proceedings of its magistrates and officers in the Wyoming Valley. In May 1784, Northumberland County officials penned an alarming letter to Governor Dickinson. They reported the "outrageous conduct" of the troops stationed at Wilkes-Barre, recounting how the soldiery had "intimidated and confined under a close Military Guard" county officials who had gone to the valley to restore order. The letter ended by informing the governor that "instead of aiding the Civil Authority," local magistrates, Pennsylvania claimants, and state troops "set it at defiance, and place[d] themselves above the Laws."<sup>72</sup>

Friction between Alexander Patterson's party and state authorities greatly contributed to the downfall of Pennamite interests in the Wyoming Valley. Northumberland officials gathered evidence against Pennamite offenders and indicted forty-five Pennsylvania

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<sup>70</sup> John Dickinson to James Moore, April 20, 1784, *SCP* 7:393.

<sup>71</sup> Alexander Patterson and Others to the Sheriff, October 9, 1783, *SCP* 7:307-308; Alexander Patterson to John Dickinson, October 20, 1783, *Ibid.*, 309.

<sup>72</sup> John Buyers and Others to John Dickinson, May 17, 1784, *SCP* 7:410-411.



claimants on charges of riot, assault, robbery, and false imprisonment in the summer of 1784. Among the accused were country magistrates Alexander Patterson and Henry Shoemaker; garrison officers James Moore, Blackall William Ball, Samuel Reed, Andrew Henderson, and John Armstrong; and a number of leading Pennamite settlers. In November, the court found forty-two of the accused guilty. Blackall William Ball received a fifty-pound fine and a two-hundred pound bond to guarantee his future good conduct. Major James Moore and Henry Shoemaker both faced one-hundred-pound fines and five-hundred-pound bonds. In addition, the state removed Shoemaker from his post as justice of the peace. The state fined Preserved Cooley, a leading Pennamite settler, five pounds and levied a fifty-pound bond. Other Pennamite offenders received fines from seventy-five pounds to twenty shillings along with hefty bonds guaranteeing their good behavior. These court convictions broke the power of Patterson and his followers.<sup>73</sup>

In November 1784 Alexander Patterson and his men evacuated Wilkes-Barre's fort and left the valley never to return. With this loss of leadership and armed force, Wyoming's Pennamites began to loose ground in the Wyoming Valley.<sup>74</sup> Between the winter of 1784 and the following summer, Yankees whittled away at Pennamites and Pennsylvania authorities. By July, only David Mead and a handful of Pennsylvania claimants remained in the valley. Mead's evacuation in August ended the Yankee-Pennamite conflict that had characterized the Wyoming dispute since the 1760s. Pennsylvania's efforts to forcefully impose its authority over the valley also came to a halt and in the final months of 1785 Yankee settlers regained controlled the Wyoming Valley.

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<sup>73</sup> Thomas McKean, William Atlee, and Jacob Rush to John Dickinson, June 7, 1784, *SCP* 7:431-432, 432 n. 4; Minutes of the Court at Sunbury, November 8, 1784, *Ibid.* 8:145-146.

<sup>74</sup> Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1452, 1453.

David Mead failed to maintain his power and property; his defeat reflects the larger dimensions of unrest in the Wyoming Valley. Mead became enmeshed in a conflict that grew out of settlers' unchecked competition for limited resources. He discovered that Pennsylvania's authority, while legitimized in a federal court, meant very little along a frontier rent by disputes over land and allegiance. Ultimately, Yankee settlers' commitment to local loyalties and local autonomy undermined Mead's position in the valley.

Mead became a marked man in a region where fidelity to family, kin, and neighbors overwhelmed notions of allegiance to the state. Mead triggered his own downfall when he attempted to prevent Yankees from plundering his hay and grain by hiring armed guards. Connecticut claimants who gathered to dispossess Mead discovered that he had fortified his house and garrisoned it with as many as fifty men. These actions greatly angered Yankees, for Mead had apparently hired on many of the same individuals who had served under Alexander Patterson the previous year. With memories of Patterson's abuses still fresh in their minds, Yankees decided not to suffer a similar fate at the hands of David Mead. By the first week in August, Connecticut claimants had mustered a sufficient force to besiege Mead's fort. When Yankees "paraded" a cannon before his stockade, Mead and his men fled the valley with whatever possessions they could carry.<sup>75</sup>

The confrontation that sealed David Mead's fate reflected the forces that shaped conflict in the Wyoming Valley and foreshadowed trends that would reshape unrest along the northeast frontier in the years to come. Weeks before his flight, Mead managed to capture some of the rioters who had attacked his home. He knew most of the men he arrested, including a Connecticut claimant, Mason Alden. Alden explained to Mead why Yankees would no longer suffer his presence among them and, in doing so, summed up the factionalism and contention over property that had dominated the Wyoming region since

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<sup>75</sup> John Franklin's Diary, July 1-November 15, 1785, *SCP* 8:275-276; John Franklin to William Samuel Johnson, July 19, 1785, *Ibid.*, 251-252; Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1476.

the Trenton Decree. "Squire Mead," Alden began, "it is you or us; Pennamites and Yankees can't live together in Wyoming. Our lines don't agree."<sup>76</sup> Even as Mead braced himself for his final showdown, the Susquehannah Company and its associates throughout New England and New York exhibited a renewed interest in the Wyoming region. Soon, new agendas as well as new faces appeared along the northeast frontier and altered the course of events. Pennsylvania would have to face a new and greater opposition, while Yankee settlers would face the challenge of maintaining the unity that had carried them through the difficult years following the Trenton Decree.

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<sup>76</sup> Smith & Harvey, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1473.

### CHAPTER III MAD BOYS & HALF-SHARE MEN

*By the malign influence of these eclipses, the United States of America will be troubled with intestine jars, and domestic quarrels, and contentions of every kind, even to the destroying the ties of friendship, and dissolving the bonds of love and kindred, to the utter ruin of families, setting husbands against their wives, and wives against their husbands, and neighbor against another.--Samuel Elsworth's almanac, 1787<sup>1</sup>*

On the night of June 26, 1788, fifteen armed backwoodsmen, their faces blacked and their heads wrapped in handkerchiefs, crept into the sleeping village of Wilkes-Barre and forced their way into the home of Timothy Pickering, a leading government official. The intruders roused Pickering from his bed and ordered him to dress, then bound his arms and spirited him out into the night. After a brief stop for a drink at a nearby tavern, Pickering's kidnappers carried him up the Susquehanna River into the sparsely inhabited forests of northern Pennsylvania. With this night-time raid, Pickering became the hostage of Yankee insurgents; he would remain their prisoner until they released him twenty days later, dirty and worn but unharmed.<sup>2</sup>

Pickering's kidnapping formed the climax of a struggle between Pennsylvania and Yankee rebels as well as between moderates (Connecticut claimants who came to accept the jurisdictional authority of Pennsylvania) and radicals (Yankees who sought to maintain

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Elsworth, *There Shall Be Wars and Rumors of Wars Before the Last Day Cometh: Solemn Predictions of Future Events, Plainly Manifested By the Planets, in the Year 1787*, Early American Imprint Series, Evans no. 20343 (Bennington: Haswell & Sussell, 1787), 5-6.

<sup>2</sup> Charles W. Upham, *The Life of Timothy Pickering*, 2 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1873), 2:381-382.

their soil rights under the Connecticut claim.) Between 1785 and 1788 the Susquehannah Company's efforts to reassert its claim, and Pennsylvania's moves to counter this threat, divided Connecticut claimants. Timothy Pickering, a leading proponent of reconciliation between Yankees and the state, had come to the Wyoming Valley in 1786 and quickly became a chief figure among Yankee moderates who were willing to accept Pennsylvania's rule in return for secure titles to their farms. Meanwhile, John Franklin became the undisputed leader of radicals who remained steadfast in their opposition to the state. In October 1787, Pennsylvania officials, hoping to break Wyoming's radical faction, ordered Franklin's arrest. Posing as prospective Yankee settlers, six deputies accosted Franklin, bound him to a horse, and whisked him away to Philadelphia. Charged with treason, Franklin languished in a jail cell where his hopes and health quickly declined. Outraged by the protracted imprisonment of their leader, Yankees searched for ways to win his release. Ultimately, they hit upon the idea of capturing Pickering and using his life to bargain for Franklin's freedom.

The abduction also marked the reconfiguration of settler insurgency in the Wyoming region. After the Second Pennamite-Yankee War, rebellious Connecticut claimants became known as "Wild boys," "mad Boys," or, most commonly, "wild yankees."<sup>3</sup> Like backcountry rebels elsewhere in the early republic, Wild Yankees fought for land and autonomy and orchestrated a campaign of violence against state officials, Pennsylvania land claimants, and moderate Yankees.<sup>4</sup> The events surrounding Pickering's abduction

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<sup>3</sup> Stephen Balliet and William Armstrong to Benjamin Franklin, July 9, 1788, Robert J. Taylor, ed., *The Susquehannah Company Papers*, 11 vols. (Ithaca: Univ. of Cornell Press, 1970), 9:401 (hereafter cited as *SCP*); Solomon Strong to Zebulon Butler and Capt. Schott, May 22, 1786, *SCP* 8:338; William Hooker Smith to Timothy Pickering, October 1787, *SCP* 9:254.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of frontier protest and frontier protest rituals in Maine and Pennsylvania, see chapter 7 in Alan Taylor, *Liberty-Men and Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement of the Maine Frontier, 1760-1820* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1990), 181-208; and chapter 4 of Dorothy E. Fennell, "From Rebelliousness to Insurrection: A Social History of the Whiskey Rebellion, 1765-1802"

provide an opportunity to examine the origins and character of Pennsylvania's Wild Yankee and to assess the values and aspirations that motivated agrarian insurgents. Pennsylvania's Wild Yankees were not simply born of settler dissent but were the product of an alliance between backcountry inhabitants and opportunistic land speculators. Yankee settlers and the Susquehannah Company created a resistance movement that rested upon frontier inhabitants' pursuit of agrarian independence as well as company shareholders' dreams of profit.

The daily rounds of rural life provided a frame of reference through which Wild Yankees settlers bridged the gap between their lives as backcountry farmers and as agrarian insurgents. Familiar patterns of rural life served as the foundation of a union between Yankee settlers and Susquehannah Company proprietors who supported them in their fight against Pennsylvania. Face-to-face relationships that operated on a household and neighborhood level--in particular, ties between yeomen farmers and their sons--structured Yankee insurgency and served to reconcile the aspirations of settlers with the more ambitious goals of the Susquehannah Company. However, though localism helped Wild Yankees to mitigate tensions between themselves and their allies, they did not eliminate them. Indeed, as the kidnapping of Timothy Pickering would make clear, the settler-land company coalition that maintained Yankee resistance did not operate without its share of friction.

Like the one that preceded it, this chapter explores the face-to-face relationships that constituted backcountry localism. In particular, it examines how the values (the primacy of agrarian independence) and social structures (family, kin, and neighborhood) of localism shaped unrest along the northeast frontier and, in turn, how the region's local culture was affected by endemic disputes over property and power. This chapter also looks at the

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(Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Pittsburgh, 1981), 89-122.

complex and, at times, cantankerous dialogue between local and translocal forces that led to the formation of Pennsylvania's Wild Yankees.

### **Moderates & Radicals**

After the Second Pennamite-Yankee War, the Susquehannah Company rejoined its struggle against Pennsylvania for control of the northeast frontier. The battle that ensued divided Connecticut claimants into two warring factions. Intense property disputes flared up as the Susquehannah Company and Pennsylvania issued land grants to their respective supporters and enmeshed Yankee settlers in a web of competing land claims. In addition, Pennsylvania's and the Susquehannah Company's efforts to impose their authority over the Wyoming region further divided Connecticut claimants by embroiling them in a contest over local political power.

The factionalism that plagued Connecticut claimants after 1785 may have been generated by outside forces but it was worked out on a local, face-to-face level. Even as Yankee settlers reforged ties with Pennsylvania and the Susquehannah Company, they continued to perceive their aims and enemies in local terms. Yankee factionalism did develop along lines of status and translocal allegiance: moderates allied themselves with Pennsylvania and tended to be more established settlers who dwelt in the Wyoming Valley's oldest towns, while radicals kept loyal to the Connecticut claim and, more often than not, lived a more marginal existence in raw backwoods settlements. However, as in the past, local struggles over land and authority continued to have the greatest impact on settler loyalties.

On the day of Pickering's abduction, an encounter took place that illustrates how highly personalized conflicts over property fueled Yankee factionalism. Joseph Kilborn, a Yankee radical, accosted Minor York, a moderate, as he labored to clear a tract of land he claimed at the upper end of Mehoopeny Creek through a Susquehannah Company right possessed

by his father, Amos York. Minor York, hoping to better secure his claim to the land, had recently matched his Connecticut deed with a Pennsylvania patent obtained through Timothy Pickering. In doing so, he made himself the enemy of settlers, such as Joseph Kilborn, who exclusively supported the soil rights of the Susquehannah Company. Kilborn declared that Yankees who accepted Pennsylvania titles would not be allowed to hold land in the Connecticut claim and informed York that the land they stood on had been awarded to John Hyde and Martin Dudley, two staunch supporters of the Susquehannah Company. Before leaving, Kilborn told York that if he did not quit the land in five days he would receive a "threshing." The day after this confrontation, Minor York squared off against Kilborn and another radical, Thomas Kinney, when the two warned York to abandon his Mehoopenny tract. At this point, York mentioned that Timothy Pickering had accepted the legitimacy of his land claims and issued him a Pennsylvania title. Joseph Kilborn responded, "If Pickering & his laws are any thing, I am nothing, and hold no lands: but if I am any thing, & hold land, then Pickering & his laws are nothing."<sup>5</sup> These words testify to how contention over soil rights became bound up with powerful emotions. To Kilborn, land did not just represent a material possession but a key to power and personal self worth.

The Susquehannah Company laid the groundwork for contention among Connecticut claimants when it voted to reassert its claim at a meeting held on July 13, 1785. Rather than petition Connecticut or the federal government for the official recognition of its soil rights, the company resolved to defend the integrity of the Connecticut claim on its own.<sup>6</sup> Their plan was straightforward: to crowd their claim with settlers who would resist Pennsylvania's authority and, by force of numbers, push the state and federal government to accept the company's soil rights.

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<sup>5</sup> Deposition of Elizabeth Wigton, August 1, 1788, *SCP* 9:444-445; Deposition of Minor York, August 18, 1788, *Ibid.*, 470-471.

<sup>6</sup> Minutes of a Meeting of the Susquehannah Company, July 13, 1785, *SCP* 8:247-250.



Company proprietors sought to fill the Connecticut claim with settlers who would hold their lands in the face of opposition from Pennsylvania and Yankee moderates. Timothy Pickering was a witness to the Susquehannah Company's aggressive settlement policies. He explained that company agents sold land to settlers "for a trifle" on the condition that they occupied their rights and remained loyal to the Connecticut claim. John Franklin, who labored to consolidate the authority he gained among Connecticut claimants during the Second Pennamite-Yankee War, also touched upon the company's efforts to secure its claim. In a letter to a leading company shareholder, Franklin explained that the company's secretary, Samuel Gray, had issued fifty certificates for land grants but failed to specify that these grants had to be occupied in order for the grants to be confirmed. As a result, Franklin complained, only seven of these grants had actually been settled. Seeing that these unoccupied rights would "answer but a Small Purpose to the Company," he concluded that it was "best to take Care how Lands are Disposed." Franklin's letter highlights that the company's new land grants were meant to encourage settlement rather than speculation.<sup>7</sup>

Policies that placed squatters' rights before those of non-resident proprietors demonstrated the company's determination to use settlement as a weapon against Pennsylvania. At a meeting of the Susquehannah Company held at Hartford in December 1786, shareholders empowered company agents to locate and survey lands for people "who shall Actually Settle And Occupy" tracts left unoccupied by non-resident proprietors. The resolve limited such grants to two hundred acres but announced that individuals who received them would gain the rights and benefits accorded to company proprietors who held whole shares of six hundred acres. Many squatters took advantage of this offer. In 1787 William Patterson gained title to one hundred acres of land originally

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<sup>7</sup> Timothy Pickering to Benjamin Rush, September 13, 1787, *SCP* 9:191; John Franklin to John Hamilton, June 8, 1786, *SCP* 8:358-359.

granted to Dr. Caleb Benton. Likewise, John Hyde obtained a legitimate company title for lands he occupied in the Wyoming Valley.<sup>8</sup> The Susquehannah Company not only allowed settlers to preempt lands held by absentee landlords, but demanded that all costs involved in locating and surveying squatters' grants be paid by the delinquent proprietors. Now more than ever, the company enforced regulations that required shareholders to occupy their lands. At the same December meeting in which company proprietors authorized land grants to squatters, they voted to compensate Connecticut claimants who had been driven from the West Branch of the Susquehanna during the First Pennamite-Yankee War by giving them equivalent lands elsewhere in the company claim. However, in keeping with the company's push for settlement, the compensating rights had to be occupied "the next summer or sooner." This gave those receiving compensation about eight months to seat themselves.<sup>9</sup>

The company's decision to award rights to settlers who would actually occupy their land became a major source of radical-moderate contention. The new grants not only overlapped Pennsylvania patents but infringed upon the soil rights of Yankees holding pre-revolutionary company deeds. Even though the company ordered its agents to "take Special Care" in laying out new rights so that preexisting claims were not "infringed," property disputes soon arose from their zealous efforts to populate the Wyoming region. Old Connecticut claimants became alienated from the Susquehannah Company as well as from Yankees who took advantage of the company's generous land policies. Timothy Pickering described how Yankee factions formed according to inhabitants' efforts to secure land. Pickering estimated that the vast majority of the 250 families of "old" settlers

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<sup>8</sup> Minutes of a Meeting of the Susquehannah Company, December 26, 1786, *SCP* 8:425-429; John Franklin to Caleb Benton, June 26, 1787, *SCP* 9:147; Company grant to John Hyde, Jr., Susquehannah Company Account Books, Liber E:271, Connecticut Historical Society (hereafter cited as SCA).

<sup>9</sup> William Judd to Zebulon Butler, January 11, 1787, *SCP* 9:6; Minutes of a Meeting of the Susquehannah Company, December 26, 1786, *SCP* 8:429.

(Connecticut claimants who obtained grants from the Susquehannah Company before the Trenton Decree) belonged to Wyoming's moderate faction. He reckoned that an equal number of "*New Comers*" (settlers who had taken up land after the Trenton Decree) dwelt in the region and made up the rank and file of the radical faction.<sup>10</sup>

By the autumn of 1786, the Susquehannah Company's new settlement policies had provoked a flurry of protest among old settlers. Reports reached Philadelphia that John Franklin, John Jenkins, and other resident agents of the Susquehannah Company had traveled up and down the North Branch of the Susquehanna River "deviding the country" among their supporters. Samuel Gordon, a Yankee moderate, complained that the company allowed settlers lay out rights over older grants held by individuals who had lost their lives during the revolutionary war before their widows and children had time to resettle their rights. Likewise, Jesse Cook, a non-resident proprietor who held a pre-Trenton Decree right in the Susquehannah Company, expressed his fear that even if Pennsylvania made provisions to accept Connecticut claims, there would "be nothing but lawsuits" between old settlers and Yankees who seated themselves on recently issued rights. Cook blamed John Franklin and the Susquehannah Company's "dispotick committy" for this state of affairs and concluded that "nither the law of god nor man" could justify the company's new settlement policies.<sup>11</sup>

Like the Susquehannah Company, the state of Pennsylvania also played a role in generating Yankee factionalism. With the passage of the Confirming Act in March 1787, the state further polarized moderates and radicals. This piece of legislation aimed at ending disturbances along the state's northeast frontier by recognizing the claims of Yankees who had obtained, and occupied, land rights issued by Connecticut land companies before the

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<sup>10</sup> Minutes of a Meeting of the Susquehannah Company, December 26, 1786, *SCP* 8:427; Extracts from Timothy Pickering's Journal, August 1786, *Ibid.*, 385-386.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Sprague to the Pennsylvania Council, November 25, 1786, *SCP* 8:421; Samuel Gordon to Obadiah Gore, October 15, 1787, *SCP* 9:240; Jesse Cook to Zebulon Butler, June 2, 1788, *Ibid.*, 382.

Trenton Decree. The law made no provisions for settlers who took up lands after 1782 or for non-resident proprietors. In effect, the act satisfied old settlers' desires for peace and secure land titles while dividing them from radicals who received nothing under its terms. The Confirming Act convinced many old settlers to pursue a course of accommodation with the state while forcing Yankees holding new rights down the path of resistance.<sup>12</sup>

The Confirming Act crystallized differences between moderate and radical Yankees. After the passage of the act Wyoming's inhabitants became divided not just over questions of how to best defend their claims, but over a real conflict of interest. Old settlers who possessed pre-Trenton Decree claims stood a good chance of gaining Pennsylvania titles if they cooperated with the state; in contrast, Yankees with post-Trenton Decree claims remained outside Pennsylvania's offers of reconciliation and steadfast in their opposition to state authority. In 1787 the state sent commissioners to Wyoming to begin the difficult and time-consuming process of examining Yankee land claims. The intense internal factionalism ignited by the Confirming Act was reflected at a meeting during which Yankee settlers debated how to receive the commissioners. John Franklin and John Jenkins headed up those settlers who opposed their arrival, while Timothy Pickering and John Hollenback led Connecticut claimants who wished to cooperate with the commissioners. In the end, the meeting turned into a brawl as heated words gave way to fists and clubs. The fight started when Hollenback struck Franklin with his horse whip. On this occasion the moderate party proved the stronger: they won the fight and carried the vote in support of the Confirming Act.<sup>13</sup>

Disputes over land were not the only thing that divided Yankees into moderate and radical camps: the northeast frontier also became the scene of fierce battles over authority

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<sup>12</sup> The Confirming Act, March 28, 1787, *SCP* 9:82-86; Jesse Cook to Timothy Pickering, June 2, 1788, *Ibid.*, 381.

<sup>13</sup> Stewart Pearce, *Annals of Luzerne County* (Philadelphia: Lippincott & Co., 1866), 92-93.

and allegiance. A power struggle developed in the Wyoming region that pitted moderates, who supported the extension of Pennsylvania's rule over its northeast frontier, against radicals, who continued to rely on the authority of extralegal settler committees and the Susquehanna Company.

A power vacuum existed after the Second Pennamite-Yankee War. Pennsylvania's clumsy, ill-directed efforts to regain control of the Wyoming Valley following the Trenton Decree had thoroughly discredited the state among Connecticut claimants. Pennsylvania officials encountered an attitude of defiance whenever they attempted to exercise their jurisdiction in the Wyoming region. For example, in 1786 Yankees accosted Thomas Grant, a deputy sheriff of Northumberland County, when he attempted to serve writs in Wilkes-Barre. The mob that had gathered at John Paul Schott's home told Grant to leave the settlement in two hours with his "damned writs" or suffer the consequences. Grant retreated to his lodgings but the crowd followed him and "order'd the Landlady to turn out the damned penamite Rascal or they would shoot through every door & window of the house." The deputy, fearing for his life, later explained that he fled the valley.<sup>14</sup> This air of defiance proved a fertile ground for the growth of Yankee political autonomy. Indeed, in November 1785 Wyoming inhabitants had formed their own local government. Settlers appointed John Franklin, Ebenezer Johnson, William Hooker Smith, John Jenkins, and John Paul Schott to a committee responsible for the public affairs and security of the Yankee settlements.<sup>15</sup>

Late in 1786 Pennsylvania once again sought to impose its authority upon the Wyoming region; however, instead of subduing Yankees with troops, this time the state attempted to pacify them with the prospect of secure land titles and political patronage. In the fall,

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas Grant to Benjamin Franklin, May 20, 1786, *SCP* 8:334-335.

<sup>15</sup> Minutes of a Meeting of the Connecticut Settlers, November 15, 1785, *SCP* 8:274.

Pennsylvania set off the Wyoming Valley (and territory that adjoined it to the north and west) from Northumberland County and established Luzerne County. This act reignited the struggle for power along the state's frontier. The reaction of Wyoming's leading Yankees illustrates this point. John Franklin, John Jenkins, and Ebenezer Johnson opposed the new county and the state institutions it would bring to the Wyoming region. John Paul Schott, like many settlers, refused to fully commit himself to either side but sought to maintain his standing with radicals who fought the creation of Luzerne County and moderates who embraced it. Finally, William Hooker Smith reacted positively toward Pennsylvania's move. In the creation of the new county, he saw an opportunity for Yankees to gain a political voice and, more important, to win title to their lands without bloodshed. Smith quickly became the leader of Yankee moderates who, for the most part, supported the establishment of Luzerne County. His efforts soon drew the ire of radicals. Indeed, Solomon Strong, a die-hard supporter of the Connecticut claim, asked John Paul Schott "to Call Doctr Smith to an account & talk the matter over with him," warning that if Smith did not stop working for the state, "the mad Boys" would "Destroye him." Here, and elsewhere, disunity and threats replaced the harmony that had once marked Yankees' relations with one another.<sup>16</sup>

The bitter factionalism created by Pennsylvania's attempts to reassert its authority over the Wyoming Valley was earlier demonstrated at a meeting called by leading radicals. During the gathering, John Jenkins lectured settlers on the legitimacy of their claim and, with equal measure, heaped scorn on settlers who talked of abandoning their Connecticut deeds. In a direct challenge to William Hooker Smith and others who cooperated with state officials, Jenkins warned that if anyone "Should Constitute or appoint any other agent, But what Should Be chosen By that meating that Day, he would Send them to the

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<sup>16</sup> Resolution of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, April 3, 1786, *SCP* 8:314, n. 4; Solomon Strong to Zebulon Butler and Paul Schott, May 22, 1786, *Ibid.*, 338.

Eternal Shades of Darkness" and finished by claiming that he "knew he Could raise a party to assist him." In the past this type of language had been reserved for Pennamites; now radicals directed it toward their neighbors. William Hooker Smith ignored such threats and continued to serve as an informant to state officials and an advocate of state authority. His stubbornness and spying placed him on a collision course with Yankee radicals: less than a month after the July meeting, settlers loyal to the Connecticut claim forced Smith to flee the Wyoming Valley.<sup>17</sup>

The election of Luzerne's county officials and state representatives in February 1787 became a centerpiece of the radical-moderate power struggle. Led by William Hooker Smith and Timothy Pickering, compromise-minded settlers supported the extension of Pennsylvania's political apparatus over the Wyoming region. Other settlers, led by John Franklin and John Jenkins, did everything in their power to derail the process. Radicals sought to maintain opposition to Pennsylvania by consistently reminding Yankees of the state's past infidelities. Furthermore, they took every opportunity to hinder pro-government petition drives and intimidate settlers who aided the formation of formal government institutions in the Wyoming Valley. For instance, William Hooker Smith recounted how radicals captured a moderate petition that expressed support for country elections and then "Comited it To the Flames Denouncing Cursings against The promoters The Signers & all That Favored it." Likewise, Yankee moderates Obadiah Gore, James Sutton, and Christopher Hurlbut became targets of angry settlers after the state appointed them as election inspectors. Radicals attempted (and ultimately failed) to intimidate these men and, in so doing, halt the elections.<sup>18</sup> When it became apparent that the February

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<sup>17</sup> An Account of a Meeting of Settlers at Wyoming, July 20, 1786, *SCP* 8:374; Abraham Westbrook and Samuel Hover to Charles Biddle, August 1786, *Ibid.*, 382. For an example of Smith offering information to Pennsylvania officials see William Shaw to Benjamin Franklin and the Council, May 18, 1786, *Ibid.*, 332-333; and William Hooker Smith to Charles Biddle, August 10, 1786, *Ibid.*, 379-381.

<sup>18</sup> William Hooker Smith to Timothy Pickering, February 21, 1787, *SCP* 9:66-67; List of

elections could not be stopped, radicals made a virtue of necessity by taking part in them. They even had enough support to obtain an important electoral victory: John Franklin became Luzerne County's first representative to the state assembly. The only disruption to mar the election took place when "some of the warm Yankees got scent" of two Pennamites who returned to the Wyoming Valley to exercise their electoral privileges and gave them a "severe beating." The recipients of this drubbing served as surrogate victims: radicals satisfied themselves with an attack on old and familiar foes after finding themselves unable to intimidate moderates.<sup>19</sup>

The failure of radical Yankees to bully moderates and halt the inroads of state authority repeated itself during the election of Luzerne County's justices of the peace in April 1787. For the most part, moderates kept radicals from disrupting the elections. Only in the county's second election district (an area around Tunkhannock Creek) did settlers loyal to the Susquehannah Company manage to disrupt the election after twice carrying off James Sutton, the election inspector. However, radicals managed only to delay the operation of the law and on May 3 the second district successfully held an election for county justices. In the end, the elections were a clear victory for Wyoming's moderate faction. All the newly appointed magistrates, including William Hooker Smith and Obadiah Gore, were opponents of the Susquehannah Company and radical Yankees.<sup>20</sup>

After the elections, confrontations between radicals and moderates increased. One such incident occurred in August 1787 when a deputy sheriff attempted to serve a writ against a member of the Earl family. The Earls had recently settled along Tunkhannock Creek under the auspices of the Susquehannah Company and they, along with the help of another

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Election Officials for Luzerne County, January 1787, *Ibid.*, 17; Nathan Denison to Charles Biddle, May 4, 1787, *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>19</sup> Journal of Timothy Pickering's Visit to Wyoming, February 1, 1787, *SCP*, 9:56-57.

<sup>20</sup> James Smith to William Hooker Smith, April 20, 1787, *SCP* 9:105; Nathan Denison to Charles Biddle, May 4, 1787, *Ibid.*, 125; Timothy Pickering to Benjamin Franklin, May 10, 1787, *Ibid.*, 127, n. 2.



Yankee radical, Zebulon Cady, took up arms against the officer. However, Tunkhannock's settlers put down their weapons once the deputy made it clear that he had been "regularly appointed" to his post and "not deputized for that particular writ."<sup>21</sup> It is significant that John Hollenback initiated the debt suit that ignited this confrontation. That Hollenback, a long-established merchant of Wilkes-Barre, prosecuted settlers for debt is not striking. What is however, is that he held land grants issued by the Susquehannah Company in 1786.<sup>22</sup> Hollenback had allied himself with radicals but later turned his back on them. Now, instead of seeking redress through company agents, he prosecuted settlers under Pennsylvania law. Hollenback's actions generated bad feelings between him and his one-time associates. On this occasion, the Earls agreed to pay their creditor, but they as well as their neighbors did not forget Hollenback's transgression.

Attacks upon moderate settlers grew into a forthright assault on Pennsylvania's authority in the fall of 1787. On September 29 John Franklin decided to test the strength of the state. The Pennsylvania legislature had scheduled Luzerne County's first militia muster for October 8. Franklin saw this a direct challenge to his power. Since the close of the Second Pennamite-Yankee War, only settlers loyal to the Connecticut claim had been able to field a significant armed force; the organization of a county militia drawn from moderate settlers would have ended this monopoly. Franklin took action and ordered his lieutenants to gather their followers on the morning of October 9, "Completely Armed & equipped," at pre-designated rallying points.<sup>23</sup> John Franklin's aggressive course of action alienated many Connecticut claimants. Even Zebulon Butler, a long-time advocate of Yankee

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<sup>21</sup> Timothy Pickering to Samuel Hodgdon, August 9, 1787, *SCP* 9:156; Half-share grant (no. 184) to Joseph Earl, October 1, 1785, *SCA*, Liber I:32; Half-share grant (no. 80) to Daniel Earl Jr., September 10, 1785, *Ibid.*, 33; Half-share grant to Zebulon Cady, September 10, 1785, *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>22</sup> Whole share grant (no. 83) to John Hollenback, November 20, 1786, *SCA*, Liber I:17.

<sup>23</sup> Nathan Kingsley to Zebulon Butler, September 29, 1787, *SCP*, 9:209; John Franklin to Jehiel Franklin, September 29, 1787, *Ibid.*, 209-210.

autonomy, took a dim view of Franklin's decision. The state soon got wind of the plan to oppose the militia muster, just the excuse it had been waiting for. In September the state had issued a warrant charging Franklin with treason and ordering his arrest, allowing local officials to put this warrant into effect at their own discretion. Luzerne's magistrates, in consultation with the Pennsylvania Council, decided that the emerging crisis called for action. On October 2 state officials engineered a daring arrest of John Franklin and brought him to Philadelphia.<sup>24</sup>

Outraged by Franklin's arrest, Yankee radicals struck back at moderate settlers and symbols of state authority. Timothy Pickering nearly became a victim of mob action when irate settlers surrounded his home in hopes of catching the man they blamed for Franklin's capture. However, the rioters missed their quarry. Pickering escaped into woods in the nick of time, evaded parties of insurgents who guarded roads leading out of the valley, and fled to Philadelphia.<sup>25</sup> Obadiah Gore, whose activities as a state informant, election inspector, and a leading Yankee moderate had vexed radicals on many occasions, did not fare so well. Half-share men "abused Esqr Gore in a shameful manner" and forced him to flee from his home at Tioga Point. Another radical mob rescued Asa Starkweather, an agent of the Susquehannah Company, after he had been captured by a party under the command of William Hooker Smith.<sup>26</sup>

Opposition to Pennsylvania subsided in the wake of Franklin's arrest but it did not disappear. Resistance endured in settlements inhabited by people loyal to the Connecticut claim. For instance, Gideon Church, who lived along Tunkhannock Creek and had served

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<sup>24</sup> Proclamation for the Arrest of John Franklin and Others, September 25, 1787, *SCP* 9:204-205; Instructions to John Craig, September 26, 1787, *Ibid.*, 207; Pearce, *Annals of Luzerne*, 93-95.

<sup>25</sup> Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1587-88.

<sup>26</sup> Ebenezer Bowman to Timothy Pickering, October 17, 1787, *SCP* 9:242; Timothy Pickering to Samuel Hodgdon, October 19, 1787, *Ibid.*, 245; Advertisement from the *Hudson Weekly Gazette*, November 8, 1787, *Ibid.*, 263-264.

as one of Franklin's chief lieutenants, threatened that "he would be damned if ever Penna Law came through the Great Swamp." Likewise, William Hooker Smith reported that Solomon Strong, another leading radical, warned him that if he did not stop supporting Pennsylvania's authority, "The wild yankeys . . . would Distroy him."<sup>27</sup> On a more concrete level, radicals continued their resistance through local politics. In Luzerne County's lower district, disgruntled settlers opposed moderates and the state by forwarding John Swift and Elisha Mathewson, two prominent supporters of the Connecticut claim, as candidates for colonel and major of Luzerne's first militia battalion. In the county's upper district, where radicals continued to hold sway, voters elected John Jenkins as colonel of the county's second battalion. In the same election, Martin Dudley, who later took an active role in Pickering's abduction, won the post of militia captain.<sup>28</sup>

Yankee factionalism reshaped the geography of resistance in northeast Pennsylvania. The Wyoming Valley, once the heartland of resistance, became a stronghold of Yankee moderates after 1786. When arranged by township, the names of settlers who signed petitions in support of county elections or who took state oaths of allegiance reveals this transformation. On the one hand, settlements in the Wyoming Valley overwhelmingly favored elections and provided the lion's share of inhabitants who took the loyalty oath. On the other, settlers who dwelt along Tunkhannock Creek and to the north rarely took the loyalty oath or signed petitions in favor of county elections. In the neighborhood of Tunkhannock, only seven settlers put their names to pro-election petitions and not a single inhabitant north of Tunkhannock signed such a document. Rebelliousness continued to flourish north of the Lackawanna River. Indeed, Timothy Pickering dutifully informed the

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<sup>27</sup> Obadiah Gore's Memoranda, October 26, 1787, *SCP* 9:252; William Hooker Smith to Timothy Pickering, October 1787, *Ibid.*, 254.

<sup>28</sup> Ebenezer Bowman to Timothy Pickering, October 21, 1787, *SCP* 9:248; William Hooker Smith to Timothy Pickering, December 7, 1787, *Ibid.*, 308.

state that "At Tunkhannock & upwards, as well criminal as civil process (so far as the latter respected lands) has been set at defiance."<sup>29</sup>

The territory between Tioga Point and Tunkhannock Creek became the crucible of Pennsylvania's Wild Yankees. The majority of the settlers who took advantage of the Susquehannah Company's generous settlements policies ended up in this region. These backcountry inhabitants upheld the authority of leading Yankee radicals and forwarded the Susquehannah Company claim while pursuing their own dreams of agrarian independence.

### **Half-share Men**

The Susquehannah Company reconfigured agrarian unrest along Pennsylvania's frontier by offering free land to settlers who would defend the Connecticut claim. At a meeting of the Susquehannah Company held on July 13, 1785, shareholders voted to offer three hundred acres to "every Able bodied and effective Man" who would "Submit himself to the Orders" of company agents. Since three hundred acres was half the size of a standard company share, or "right," those who took up this offer became known as half-share men. The company limited these half-share rights to four hundred. The settlers who accepted them became the original cadre of Pennsylvania's Wild Yankees.<sup>30</sup> Through this initiative, the company changed Yankee dissent from sporadic outbreaks of settler violence to a coherent resistance movement. Timothy Pickering later testified that the Susquehannah Company "principally depended" upon the support of half-share men and asserted that these Yankee partisans had "been the instruments of all the outrages" committed against Pennsylvania.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Declarations in Support of the Laws of Pennsylvania, April 21, 1787, *SCP* 9:106-110; Oaths of Allegiance of Timothy Pickering and Others, April 26, 1787, *Ibid.*, 114-115; Oaths of Allegiance before Timothy Pickering and Others, January-February 1787, *Ibid.*, 13-17; Timothy Pickering to Peter Muhlenberg, Aug 9, 1788, *Ibid.*, 462-463.

<sup>30</sup> Minutes of a Meeting of the Susquehannah Company, July 13, 1785, *SCP* 8:249.

<sup>31</sup> Timothy Pickering to John Pickering, August 4, 1788, *SCP* 9:446-447.

The daily rounds of frontier life provided a familiar set of relationships with which settlers contextualized their roles as backwoods rebels. The events surrounding Pickering's abduction demonstrate that backcountry localism, as well as the policies of the Susquehannah Company, colored agrarian insurgency in northeast Pennsylvania. Through the half-share resolves, the Susquehannah Company set the stage for the emergence of Pennsylvania's Wild Yankees. Nevertheless, settlers' face-to-face relationships continued to structure unrest and served to reconcile the aspirations of half-share men with the goals of their company sponsors. Yankee insurgency spanned two worlds: on the one hand, it became involved with the Susquehannah Company's plans to secure its land claims; on the other, it remained bound to a social landscape of kin, households, and neighborhoods. The degree to which the two came together depended upon the ability of Yankee settlers to fit the demands of resistance into familiar patterns of daily life.

A close look at the individuals who participated in Pickering's abduction sheds light on the social context of Yankee resistance. One of the first people to contribute to an understanding of these agrarian insurgents was Timothy Pickering himself. On the night of his abduction, Pickering discovered that beneath the blacking that covered his captors' faces lurked the familiar visages of Gideon and Joseph Dudley, sons of Martin Dudley, who had once been a "near neighbor" to Pickering in Wilkes-Barre.<sup>32</sup> Thus, understanding agrarian resistance begins with an examination of the identity and social position of half-share settlers.

Yankee moderates and Pennsylvania officials commonly accused half-share men of being outside agitators, men of little wealth and fewer morals who, having failed to make ends meet in older settlements to the east, became willing recruits of the Susquehannah Company. In 1787 detractors described Wild Yankees as "a dangerous combination of

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<sup>32</sup> Upton, *Life of Timothy Pickering*, 2:384.

villains, composed of runaway debtors, criminals, and adherents of Shays."<sup>33</sup> Here and elsewhere, those who opposed half-share men portrayed them as strangers who came to Pennsylvania to take advantage of the Susquehannah Company's generous offers of free land and to escape prosecution for crimes in neighboring states. But such characterizations rested on prejudice far more than fact.

Timothy Pickering, one of the Wild Yankees' more observant adversaries, pieced together a far more accurate and complex picture of Pennsylvania's Yankees rebels. Pickering, who had drawn a sharp distinction between "New-Comers" and "old settlers" when he first came to the Wyoming Valley, later discovered that "*one half* of the old settlers & their sons" held half-share rights. Furthermore, at a settlers' meeting held in January 1787, Pickering heard John Jenkins claim that not more than thirty of the half-share men were "*New-Comers*." Pickering came to realize that the majority of half-share men, far from being footloose outsiders, had resided in the Wyoming Valley long before the Susquehannah Company's adoption of the half-share resolves in July 1785. Pickering explained that in addition to "half-share-men in the strictest sense of the phrase, there is a multitude of the *old settlers* to whom Franklin had the policy to grant half-share rights."<sup>34</sup>

Only a minority of half-share men were newcomers to the Wyoming region. During his captivity, Pickering learned that one of his captors, David Woodward, had been in Vermont and Western Massachusetts before taking up a half-share right near Meshoppen Creek. Likewise, the Susquehannah Company's account books record half-share certificates being made out to other would-be immigrants, such as Jonathan Smith of Lyme, Connecticut.<sup>35</sup> However, men like Smith and Woodward represent exceptions, not

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<sup>33</sup> Extract from the *Connecticut Courant*, September 10, 1787, *SCP* 9:188.

<sup>34</sup> Timothy Pickering to Peter Muhlenberg, August 9, 1788, *SCP* 9:460; Timothy Pickering to Benjamin Franklin, July 28, 1788, *Ibid.*, 429.

<sup>35</sup> Journal Kept by Timothy Pickering during His Captivity, July 11, 1788, *SCP* 9:408; Half-share grant (no. 110) to Jonathan Smith, August 27, 1785, *SCA*, Liber F:277.

the rule. Zerah Beach, who emerged as a leading figure in the Susquehannah Company after the Revolution, testified to the difficulties he encountered when he tried to convince outsiders to take up half-share rights. Beach cautioned his associates not "to have much dependence" on immigrants lending their support to the Connecticut claim and recommended that company agents concentrate on issuing half-share grants to Connecticut claimants who already resided in Pennsylvania. Beach highlighted the fact that the vast majority of half-share men who actually occupied their grants were not land-hungry outsiders but established Connecticut claimants who obtained their certificates from John Franklin.<sup>36</sup>

The sons of established Connecticut claimants provided the bulk of half-share recruits. Most of the half-share men who kidnapped Pickering do not appear in lists of Connecticut settlers before the late 1780s. This does not prove that the insurgents were strangers to Pennsylvania's Yankee settlements but reflects the fact that the sons of older Connecticut claimants took up half-share rights. The names of Pickering's assailants may not show up in documents, but their fathers' names do. For example, Martin Dudley appears in 1783 on a list of Connecticut claimants drawn up by Pennsylvania as a carpenter residing in Wilkes-Barre, while his two half-share sons, Gideon and Joseph, do not. Likewise, Darius Parks' signature can be found on an agreement drawn up by Connecticut claimants who agreed to petition for land in New York in 1783, but William Carney, Parks' grandson and a half-share settler, fails to turn up. Because of their age and lack of property, the names and identity of these young men were subsumed beneath those of their fathers. Thus, the invisibility of half-share men in the written record does not equal their absence.<sup>37</sup> Gideon Dudley, Joseph Dudley, and William Carney did not gain a status separate from their

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<sup>36</sup> Zerah Beach to Zebulon Butler, September 21, 1785, *SCP* 8:262. For a listing of half-share grants issued by John Franklin, see "Of the 400 Half Shares I issued to settlers," SCA, Liber C.

<sup>37</sup> Oscar Jewell Harvey and Ernst G. Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania*, 6 vols. (Wilkes-Barre, 1927-1930), 3:1312-1314, 1332-1333.

fathers until they became, thanks to the half shares, heads of independent households and landowners.

Wild Yankees were not a landless frontier proletariat but young, aspiring farmers who waited to inherit property from their fathers or, as was often the case, joined the Susquehannah Company as half-share settlers to accelerate their attainment of yeoman status. Indeed, age and household status, not class, circumscribed the social and economic standing of half-share men. For the most part, Wild Yankees were unmarried, home-bound, and propertyless young adults. They were separated from property and independence not by static social barriers, but by a dynamic social process whereby one generation passed on wealth to the next. Descriptions of Yankee rebels commonly stressed their youth. During a tour of Pennsylvania's northeast frontier in 1787, Timothy Pickering commented that only "rash young men" openly supported the Susquehannah Company. Likewise, the word "boys" repeatedly crops up in descriptions of Yankee insurgents. This characterization was accurate: one of Nathan Abbot's sons was seventeen years old when he helped to abduct Pickering; Aaron Kilborn, who also played a role in the kidnapping, was only fifteen.<sup>38</sup>

The most active Yankee insurgents were household dependents--sons of older Connecticut claimants who dutifully upheld their fathers' half-share obligations or took up half-share rights in order to obtain the land they needed to become independent yeomen. The identity of Pickering's kidnappers bears this out. Three of his captors, Daniel, Benjamin, and Solomon Earl, were sons of Joseph Earl. Like their father, Daniel and

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<sup>38</sup> Journal of Timothy Pickering's Visit to Wyoming, January 26 & 31, 1787, *SCP* 9:52, 56; Upton, *Life of Timothy Pickering*, 2:386; Timothy Pickering to Peter Muhlenberg, August 9, 1788, *SCP* 9:458; Timothy Pickering to Thomas Mifflin, November 15, 1788, *Ibid.*, 518. Christopher Jedry touches upon the relationship between age, wealth, and social standing in Christopher M. Jedry, *The World of John Cleaveland: Family and Community in Eighteenth-Century New England* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1979), 63.



Benjamin possessed half-share rights while Solomon, who held no company right of his own, served in his father's place. Like Joseph Earl, Nathan Abbot sent his two sons to abduct Pickering instead of taking part in the kidnapping himself. Martin Dudley's sons, Gideon and Joseph, were another pair of younger settlers who satisfied their father's commitments to Yankee resistance and furthered their own pursuit of agrarian independence by becoming half-share men and kidnappers.<sup>39</sup>

Besides being members of frontier households, half-share men belonged to backwoods communities held together by ties of kinship, the collective endeavor of frontier settlement, and their mutual opposition to the state. A few backwoods settlements provided the bulk of active Wild Yankees and contained the homes of nearly all the settlers who took part in Pickering's abduction. Kidnappers Ira Manville, Benjamin, Daniel, and Solomon Earl, Zebulon Cady, Daniel Taylor, and Frederick Budd all resided along Tunkhannock Creek in a Yankee community known as Putnam. A settlement on the banks of Meshoppen Creek contributed John Hyde, Gideon and Joseph Dudley, Aaron and Timothy Kilborn, David Woodward, and William Carney. Finally, Benjamin and Nathan Abbot, Garret Smith, and John Tyler hailed from Whitehaven, a neighborhood just south of Meshoppen Creek.<sup>40</sup> Clearly, agrarian resistance was not sustained by freelance agitators but by individuals who were part of the social fabric of frontier settlements.

Like rural communities across early America, Wild Yankees included a few prominent individuals who sustained their links with the outside world, a good number of less wealthy but independent householders, and numerous dependent sons waiting to obtain their own freeholds. A petition draw up by Yankee radicals protesting their treatment by the state of Pennsylvania demonstrates that resistance created not only disunity but

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<sup>39</sup> Timothy Pickering to Benjamin Franklin, July 29, 1788, *SCP* 9:433-435; For half-share rights of the Earls, Abbots, and Dudleys, see "Of the 400 Half Shares I issued to settlers," SCA, Liber C.

<sup>40</sup> "Of the 400 Half Shares I issued to settlers," SCA, Liber C; Proceedings of Committee of Claims Respecting the Claimants of Putnam, November 27, 1786, SCA, Liber I:31.

opportunities for a renewal of settler mutuality and social order. Among the names attached to this petition can be found those of John Jenkins, Elisha Satterlee, Waterman Baldwin, Elisha Mathewson, John Swift, and William Slocum. These men represented a veteran cadre of prominent Yankee settlers who had held political office under Connecticut's jurisdiction and defended the Connecticut claim since before the Revolution. Also present are the signatures of Joseph Earl, Nathan Abbot, Ephraim Tyler, and Martin Dudley--older half-share men who advised and supported the efforts of younger, rank-and-file Wild Yankees. Finally, Ira Manville, John Hyde, Daniel Earl, Benjamin Earl, Gideon Dudley, and other "boys" who actually perpetrated Pickering's kidnapping signed the petition.<sup>41</sup> These three types of Wild Yankees--leading men, older settlers, and young activists--formed a hierarchy that mirrored an agrarian social order.

The Yankee factionalism of the latter 1780s had its flip side: the acts of resistance and aggressive settlement policies that divided moderate Connecticut claimants from their more radical counterparts simultaneously drew together settlers committed to the legitimacy of the Susquehannah Company's soil rights and Yankee autonomy. However, Wild Yankees who overcame the opposition of moderates and the state still had to contend with tensions that developed between themselves and the Susquehannah Company.

After the Second Pennamite-Yankee War, agrarian insurgency rested on an alliance between Yankee settlers and the powerful non-resident proprietors of the Susquehannah Company. The former fought against Pennsylvania in order to defend their freeholds. The latter opposed the state in hopes of winning control of the millions of acres embraced by the Susquehannah and Delaware company purchases. Thus, the pursuit of property

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<sup>41</sup> Remonstrance of Luzerne Inhabitants against William Montgomery, September 18, 1787, *SCP* 9:195-198.

(though on a vastly different scale) created a common ground for half-share men and land developers. However, this union did not exist free of contradictions and contention.

On July 20, 1786, Connecticut claimants gathered together and articulated the principles that framed the common defense of their soil rights. Half-share settlers and Susquehannah Company proprietors described themselves as "joint-tenants" of the Connecticut claim and declared that they would stand together in the defense of their property. They argued that a legitimate title to land could be obtained only through the combination of "purchase and occupancy" and asserted that "the labours bestowed in subdueing a rugged wilderness" could not be wrested from frontier inhabitants without "infringing the eternal rules of right."<sup>42</sup> These statements blended two competing images of property. On the one hand, company shareholders upheld a commercial conception of property in which land was a commodity that could only be bought or sold through a strict adherence to legal procedure. On the other, they evoked an agrarian vision of property that stressed how occupation and the application of labor, not money or legal right, provided the only just title to unsettled lands.<sup>43</sup> The juxtaposition of these divergent values both reflects the extent to which these land speculators and frontier yeomen managed to bring themselves together and highlights the distance that still separated them. Indeed, these competing definitions of property would remain compatible only for as long as half-share settlers and the Susquehannah Company cooperated in their efforts to secure land.

In return for land and the prospect of legal title, settlers who took up half-share rights had to fulfill a number of obligations to the Susquehannah Company. The company demanded loyalty from its half-share men and expected them to defend the Connecticut claim with force. Moreover, in order to have their rights confirmed, half-share settlers had

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<sup>42</sup> Minutes of a Meeting Held in Wyoming, July 20, 1786, *SCP* 8:371-372.

<sup>43</sup> For a more extensive exploration of these competing visions of property see Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men*, 24-29; and Charles E. Brooks, *Frontier Settlement and Market Revolution: The Holland Land Purchase* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1996), 31, 121, 124, 130-132.

to remain seated on their land for three years. Finally, settlement had to be immediate: the company specified that half-share men who did not occupy their lands by October 1, 1786 would have their rights revoked. Two months after the company's July meeting, John Franklin gathered together the first contingent of settlers who had agreed to take up half-share grants and issued them their rights. Several of the men who took part in Pickering's abduction obtained half-share titles at this meeting; other future kidnappers received half-share rights in the months that followed.<sup>44</sup>

The relationship between the Susquehannah Company and its half-share settlers, no matter how reciprocal, suffered from internal tensions. Pickering asserted that the company "depended" upon its partisan settlers, yet these bonds of dependency ran both ways. For half-share settlers, obligations to a land company presented a problem: they had to reconcile their interests, which were anchored in households and neighborhoods, with the more far-reaching aspirations of speculators. Wild Yankees' pursuit of agrarian independence did not sit well with their commitments to non-resident speculators. This tension between independence and dependency underlay settler resistance in northeast Pennsylvania after 1785 and contributed to the dramatic failure of Yankee insurgency in 1788.<sup>45</sup>

Yankee insurgents struggled with the paradox of a resistance movement that promoted settler autonomy on one level but that, on another, required frontier yeomen to subordinate themselves to a land company. Membership and land rights in the

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<sup>44</sup> John Franklin's Diary, Sept 10, 1785, *SCP* 8:277; Half-share grants issued to Joseph Kinney, Zebulon Cady, and Daniel Earl, September 10, 1785, *SCA*, Liber I:12, 32, 33. Another kidnapper, Benjamin Earl, received his half-share on October 1, 1785, *Ibid.*, 98. For half-share grants to other kidnappers, see John Franklin's list of half shares he issued to settlers entitled "Of the 400 Half Shares I issued to settlers," *SCA*, Liber C.

<sup>45</sup> For a discussion and definition of dependency see Richard L. Bushman, "'This New Man': Dependence and Independence, 1776" in Richard L. Bushman, et al., ed., *Uprooted Americans: Essays in Honor of Oscar Handlin* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1979), 77-96, especially pg. 81.

Susquehannah Company, though free in terms of dollars and cents, did not come without a price. Half-share men soon discovered that in order to achieve their own goals of property ownership, material security, and household independence they also had to defend the interests of speculators. On a more immediate level, the conditions of occupancy and obedience the company attached to its half-share grants contradicted a central tenant of agrarian independence: the right of every yeoman farmer to use his land and labor as he saw fit.<sup>46</sup> The Susquehannah Company hoped its half-share settlers would serve as pawns in its land-grabbing schemes. Those who took up half-share rights, however, remained conscious of their own goals and did their best to navigate a path between meeting their obligations to the Susquehannah Company and fulfilling their aspirations as yeomen farmers.

Wild Yankees tapped into a familiar framework of neighborhood and family life to bridge the gap between their pursuit of agrarian independence and the ties of dependency that bound them to the Susquehannah Company. In particular, the patriarchal relationships that established the authority of fathers over sons legitimized the dependent relationships experienced by half-share men. Traditionally, adult male propertyholders wielded power over sons who lacked the resources they needed to start their own families. These young men, and their female counterparts, were household dependents.<sup>47</sup> When yeomen fathers participated in economic exchanges that infringed upon their status as autonomous householders--ones that required them to sell their labor or involved commercial relationships beyond their control--they relegated such duties, when possible, to their

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<sup>46</sup> Brooks, *Frontier Settlement*, 7.

<sup>47</sup> For discussions of household hierarchy and the division of labor by age and gender see Daniel Vickers, "Working the Fields in a Developing Economy: Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630-1675," in Stephen Innes, ed., *Work and Labor in Early America* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1988), 49-69; and Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Martha Ballard and Her Girls: Women's Work in Eighteenth-Century Maine," in *Ibid.*, 70-105.

dependents. For instance, in order to make ends meet, a father might order his sons to work as wage laborers for a wealthy farmer or to participate in craft production for local merchants. Tasks that required rural people to obey the orders of neighbors, storekeepers, or far-away merchants were deemed proper jobs for the sons and daughters of yeoman households. This system should not be construed as a brand of domestic slavery but as a negotiated process in which parents and children were interdependent.<sup>48</sup>

The domestic hierarchy that placed fathers over sons provided Connecticut claimants with a model for participation in an agrarian resistance movement orchestrated by the Susquehannah Company. The roles young men played in early America's rural communities made them logical Wild Yankee activists. Traditionally, the sons of rural households formed a family-based labor pool who lent a hand on the family farm or were hired out by their fathers to work for others. This system of rural out-work rested on a father-son relationship whereby sons agreed to labor for their fathers who, in return, promised to supply their sons with the resources they needed to set up their own farms. This same arrangement furnished Yankee settlers with a precedent for participating in agrarian resistance. Nestled among the events surrounding Pickering's capture are two episodes that demonstrate how daily life and domestic relations framed settler resistance. On one occasion, Stephen Jenkins hired Calvin Adams to accompany him on a journey down the Susquehanna River; Jenkins negotiated the deal not with Calvin but with his father. This procedure was not unusual and fit into a common pattern whereby older settlers swapped their sons' labor for cash, goods, or a promise to return the favor.<sup>49</sup> A similar transaction demonstrates how this labor exchange blended in with efforts to recruit

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<sup>48</sup> Daniel Vickers, "Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America," *William & Mary Quarterly* 47 (January 1990): 47, 9-10.

<sup>49</sup> Deposition of Calvin Adams, August 19, 1788, *Pickering Papers*, 58:109. For another exploration of labor relations between yeomen fathers and their sons see Vickers, "Working the Fields in a Developing Economy", 49-69; and Idem., "Competency and Competition," 7-8.

settlers to kidnap Timothy Pickering. One day, as Darius Parks and John Jenkins discussed the utility of taking Pickering hostage, Parks declared that, in addition to donating money and provisions to the kidnappers, he "would turn out one man." Daniel Earl shed light on Park's statement when he testified that "William Carney was encouraged to join us by Darius Parks his grandfather who fixed him out for the purpose." Like Mr. Adams, Mr. Parks used his patriarchal authority to engage the services of his grandson "Billy;" unlike Calvin Adams, William Carney was not employed as a laborer but as a kidnapper.<sup>50</sup>

The kidnapping plot, born of the ambitions of speculators, soon became intertwined with settlers' social networks. Indeed, during the period of Pickering's captivity, Yankee households and neighborhoods provided his kidnappers with provisions, shelter, and intelligence. Pennsylvania officials, once they discovered this family-based support network, arrested the kidnappers' fathers and other close relations. Joseph Earl, Martin Dudley, and Joseph Kilborn all ended up before Pennsylvania magistrates for the auxiliary role they played in the abduction.<sup>51</sup> These men claimed that they knew nothing of the plot until after Pickering had been taken; however, the testimony of their fellow conspirators did not support their story. Garret Smith stated that when he asked Martin Dudley if he knew anything of the plot, Dudley answered that he did and added that he did not want both of his sons to participate in the kidnapping. When Smith asked him why, Dudley replied, "for fear they should be found out, for if one was at home, people would think the other was somewhere at work." Mr. Dudley hoped that the common practice of trading young men's labor would hide his family's involvement in the kidnapping plot. In the end,

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<sup>50</sup> Deposition of Daniel Earl, September 13, 1788, *SCP* 9:490; Deposition of William Carney, July 29, 1788, *Ibid.*, 431; Deposition of Anna Dudley, August 20, 1788, *Ibid.*, 473.

<sup>51</sup> Evidence against Thomas Kinney, Elijah Reynolds, Joseph Earl, Ephraim Tyler, Martin Dudley, and Joseph Kilborn, July 5, 1788, *Pickering Papers*, 58:111.

Martin decided that Gideon would go but wished to keep Joseph at home "lest it should be found out that his sons were in the Scrape."<sup>52</sup>

This marriage of household relationships and Yankee resistance did not operate without generating tensions between Connecticut claimants and their leaders. Settler families not only complemented the Susquehannah Company's authority but competed with it. Yankee inhabitants were willing to participate in acts of insurgency against the state, but they sought to do so on their own terms. It would be unrealistic to expect that people who proved so savvy at defending their interests and way of life against government authorities would have meekly bowed to the directives of a land company. For instance, some families willingly sent their sons to kidnap Pickering, others did so grudgingly. Joseph Earl was the one half-share elder whose protests of ignorance about the plot seem genuine. Joseph claimed that he found out about his sons' involvement in the kidnapping only when he returned home one day to find his wife crying because Daniel, Solomon, and Benjamin had left to take Pickering. Likewise, Anna Dudley defied the directives of Wild Yankee leaders when she opposed her family's involvement in the kidnapping plot. When Darius Parks asked Anna to talk to her husband about recruiting her sons to take part in the kidnapping, she refused to do so.<sup>53</sup>

Harnessing traditional household relationships to agrarian resistance placed a burden on Yankee families. Backcountry households were understandably cautious when it came to having their fathers and sons risk their lives in defense of the Susquehannah Company's soil rights. The household relationships that supported settler resistance became especially strained after Pickering's abduction. When Pennsylvania officials captured Benjamin Abbot, they pressed him about the role that he and his father played in the kidnapping plot.

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<sup>52</sup> Deposition of Garret Smith, August 7, 1788, *SCP* 9:452-453. For evidence of Capt. Dudley's prior knowledge of the kidnapping also see the Deposition of William Carney, July 29, 1788, *Ibid.*, 431.

<sup>53</sup> Testimony Concerning the Capture of Timothy Pickering, July 5, 1788, *SCP* 9:394; Deposition of Anna Dudley, August 20, 1788, *Ibid.*, 472-473.



This line of questioning made Benjamin uneasy: he wanted to soften the criminal charges he faced, yet he did not want to do this at the cost of incriminating his father. Benjamin carefully made his statement, recounting that his father was present when kidnappers Joseph Dudley and Daniel Earl asked him to join them; however, he added that his father "neither commanded him to go, or told him not to go."<sup>54</sup> By showing that his father failed to advise him, Benjamin hoped to accomplish two things: to make it seem that he could not be held fully accountable for his actions and to prove that his father played a passive and thus a less criminal role in the kidnapping.

Pickering's kidnapping did more than generate father-son tensions. Indeed, his capture, instead of galvanizing resistance, created dissension between settlers, leading Yankee radicals, and the Susquehannah Company. Half-share men felt betrayed by their leaders and gave evidence against the men who had instigated the plot; as kidnapper Daniel Earl put it, they were determined that "every shoe should bear its own weight."<sup>55</sup> However, the reasons behind this collapse existed long before the kidnapping. In particular, the parochialism that characterized settlers' attitudes did not always rest comfortably with the Susquehannah Company's bid for supremacy.

### **The Kidnapping**

Although the Wild Yankees' plans got off to a promising start, the kidnapping plot ended in disaster. Instead of forcing Pennsylvania to release Franklin, taking Pickering hostage only gave state officials an excuse to order out the militia against the insurgents. Locally, the kidnapping served to divide Yankee settlers instead of unifying them. Many Connecticut claimants were unwilling to support such desperate acts, while others, believing that Pennsylvania would ultimately prevail, took the opportunity to prove their

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<sup>54</sup> Deposition of Benjamin Abbot, August 4, 1788, *Pickering Papers*, 58:79.

<sup>55</sup> Deposition of Isaac Blackmer, Aug. 1, 1788, *Ibid.*, 75.

newfound loyalty to the state by taking part in efforts to capture the kidnappers and bring them to justice. The kidnappers, rather than striking a critical blow against state rule, soon found themselves on the run from numerous parties of militia. In the backwoods chase that ensued, one settler was killed and one militia officer severely wounded in skirmishes between the kidnappers and state troops.<sup>56</sup>

In the days leading up to Pickering's release, the kidnappers lost their nerve and reflected upon the events that had led them into their desperate situation. Daniel Earl bitterly observed "that the persons who had advised them in this affair had now fallen back." He mixed his disappointment with a determination to have his revenge upon the men who had misled and betrayed him.<sup>57</sup> The kidnapping brought conflicts among Wild Yankees to the surface. More specifically, the plot ignited tensions that smoldered between half-share settlers, who only desired freeholds and independence, and the more wider agenda of the proprietors of the Susquehannah Company, regaining control of the Connecticut claim.

Even after the Susquehannah Company reentered the dispute, interpersonal conflicts between backcountry inhabitants continued to shape settler unrest. Such face-to-face contention should not be seen as a sub-plot or sideshow to Pickering's abduction. On the contrary, the fact that half-share settlers attempted to settle long-standing personal scores hints at the multiple, and not always complementary, agendas that motivated Yankee resistance. One of the most striking features of Pickering's abduction was that the kidnappers never articulated the reasons why they had taken Pickering or what they hoped to gain from it. This silence sheds light on the gap that existed between the ambitious schemes of the speculators who sponsored Yankee resistance and the more immediate concerns of half-share settlers. The leading proprietors of the Susquehannah Company

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<sup>56</sup> Zebulon Butler and Others to Benjamin Franklin, July 9, 1788, *SCP* 9:400; Zebulon Butler to Peter Muhlenberg, July 29, 1788, *Ibid.*, 439.

<sup>57</sup> Deposition of Isaac Blackmer, August 1, 1788, *Pickering Papers*, 58:75.

hatched the plot to take Pickering as a bid to strengthen their hand against Pennsylvania in their efforts to win the release of John Franklin. However, the plot was executed by backcountry inhabitants who, instead of focusing on the Company's agenda, often used the abduction as an opportunity to air local grievances.

Throughout the tumult caused by Pickering's abduction, half-share men took advantage of opportunities to settle local disputes rather than limiting themselves to the Company's directives. For instance, a week after Pickering's abduction, half-share settlers from Tunkhannock Creek "assembled in a riotous manner about the House of a Mr. [Zebulon] Marcey." Though linked to the contest between Pennsylvania and the Susquehannah Company, the riot sprang from a series of past confrontations between Marcy and his neighbors. Although he was a Connecticut claimant, Marcy angered his predominantly half-share neighbors by supporting Pennsylvania's authority. More important, Marcy earned the enmity of Tunkhannock's half-share settlers by challenging their property rights before the Susquehannah Company's executive committee. Here, as elsewhere, frontier conflict was intensely personal. In a scene familiar to the backcountry, the Yankee mob resolved this local dispute by dispossessing Marcy and tearing down his house.<sup>58</sup>

Garret Smith, one of the half-share men who kidnapped Pickering, described how he and his compatriots personalized their resistance to Pennsylvania by viewing it as an opportunity to further their vendettas against local opponents. In particular, the kidnappers saw the uprising as a means of dispossessing their enemies. Smith believed that in return for Pickering's capture he would receive land and crops confiscated from Yankees who supported Pennsylvania's authority. He also claimed that the kidnappers planned to take possession of a mill owned by another Yankee turncoat, John Hollenback. When Garret Smith asked fellow kidnapper Gideon Dudley what they would do if they

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<sup>58</sup> Deposition of Andrew Ellicott, June 8, 1788, *SCP* 9:394-395; Proceedings of Committee of Claims Respecting the Claimants of Putnam, November 7, 1786, *SCA*, Liber I:31.

captured Hollenback, Dudley replied that they would "tomahawk him." On another occasion, Pickering's captors came out of hiding with the intent of killing Zebulon Marcy's oxen; only with some difficulty did Stephen Jenkins divert the kidnappers from their plan.<sup>59</sup>

The half-share men who held Timothy Pickering behaved in ways that demonstrate how local agendas informed their actions. Even though Yankee settlers and the Susquehannah Company's leadership found a common ground in their opposition to Pennsylvania, they often spoke past one another. Whereas Susquehannah Company proprietors saw half-share men as instruments in their campaign to win back the Connecticut claim, the half-share men saw themselves as frontier farmers struggling to secure their farms and independence.

The key to understanding the failure of the kidnapping plot lies in recognizing that nonresident proprietors of the Susquehannah Company hatched the plan to capture Pickering rather than disgruntled half-share settlers. Timothy Pickering himself firmly believed that speculators associated with the Susquehannah Company had promoted his capture, recalling that several months before his abduction, John Jenkins, who served as a liaison between Yankee settlers and powerful company shareholders in New York and New England, had "menacingly" threatened that Wild Yankees would carry him off.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, the kidnappers did look to outsiders for guidance. During his captivity, Pickering took note of his guards' allusions to the "great men" who directed their actions. On one occasion, he noted that the kidnappers apologized for chaining him to a tree, explaining that "*such were their orders.*" The great men who issued these commands did not come

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<sup>59</sup> Deposition of Garret Smith, August 7, 1788, *SCP* 9:454; Deposition of Isaac Blackmer, August 1, 1788, *Pickering Papers*, 58:75.

<sup>60</sup> Upton, *Life of Timothy Pickering*, 2:381; Timothy Pickering to Benjamin Franklin, July 19, 1788, *SCP* 9:416-417; Deposition of Andrew Ellicott, July 7, 1788, *Ibid.*, 395.

from the ranks of half-share settlers, or even from within their communities, but from powerful land developers who dwelt beyond the bounds of the northeast frontier.<sup>61</sup>

It is difficult to determine exactly who came up with the idea of taking Pickering, but a number of individuals consistently appear in testimony pertaining to the plot's origins and promoters. John Jenkins heads up the list of likely instigators. Daniel Earl claimed that Jenkins offered him land at Tioga Point if he took part in the kidnapping and promised that he would give fifty dollars to the "boys" who captured Pickering so that they should "have the money among them to make a frolic." Kidnapper William Carney testified that he and his fellow kidnappers stopped at John Jenkins' home in order to obtain his "advice and direction" concerning Pickering's capture. John McKinstry, Dr. Caleb Benton, Joseph Hamilton, and other speculators who allied themselves with the Susquehannah Company also seem to have been guiding forces behind the plot. Likewise, leading Yankee radicals Elisha Satterlee, John Swift, Waterman Baldwin, and Gideon Church knew of the plan to capture Pickering and helped to recruit the half-share men who carried it out.<sup>62</sup>

Leading Yankee radicals and powerful company shareholders encouraged half-share settlers' to kidnap Pickering but failed to support them in the difficult days that followed his capture. Benjamin Earl, a kidnapper who later gave evidence against his co-conspirators, made it clear that some of the chief men in the Susquehannah Company had promoted the plot to take Pickering. Earl noted that John Jenkins and his brother, Stephen, "repeatedly" advised half-share men to "make up a party & sieze Colo. Pickering" and, once the kidnappers had assembled, supplied them with gunpowder. Likewise, Gideon Church promised the kidnappers material and spiritual support in the

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<sup>61</sup> Upton, *Life of Timothy Pickering*, 2:385; Journal Kept by Timothy Pickering during His Captivity, June 26, 1788, *SCP* 9:406; Timothy Pickering to Rebecca Pickering, July 3, 1788, *Ibid.*, 392.

<sup>62</sup> Deposition of Daniel Earl and Statement of Solomon Earl, September 13, 1788, *SCP* 9:488-489; Deposition of William Carney, July 29, 1788, *Ibid.*, 431-432; Deposition of Garret Smith, August 7, 1788, *Ibid.*, 452.

form of flour and twenty gallons of whiskey. Elisha Satterlee, another prominent radical, encouraged Daniel Earl to take part in the kidnapping by promising five dollars to the man who brought news of Pickering's capture. Leading radicals supplied the kidnappers with provisions, money, and moral support; however, they denied them their guidance.<sup>63</sup>

During the summer of 1788, Wild Yankees suffered a crisis of leadership. To a great extent, this problem can be laid at the feet of John Jenkins. Jenkins, who had long served as John Franklin's second in command, found it difficult to fill the shoes of the jailed resistance leader. Jenkins, who played a prominent role in forwarding the kidnapping plot, lost his nerve as the plan neared its execution. When he expressed some of his doubts to Darius Parks, Parks reprimanded him "for his neglect" and reminded Jenkins that "he was the only head man now [that] Franklin was taken." Jenkins found it impossible to halt the plan he had helped to set in motion. Seeing no way out of his predicament, Jenkins abandoned his followers and slipped away to the Finger Lakes region of New York. Jenkins's younger brother Stephen went through a similar change of heart.<sup>64</sup> Stephen's wavering commitment to Yankee resistance personified the crisis of confidence that took hold of Wyoming's radical faction. After promoting the plot to take Pickering, Stephen backed out just as half-share men moved to execute the plan. Daniel Earl testified that Stephen had spoken to him "at sundry times" about taking Pickering and "urged" and "encouraged" such action. However, when the kidnappers came down the Susquehanna to make their raid on Wilkes-Barre, Stephen refused to join them.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Deposition of Benjamin Earl, July 19, 1788, *SCP* 9:418-420; Deposition of Elijah Oakley, August 18, 1788, *Pickering Papers*, 58:106; Deposition of Daniel Earl, September 13, 1788, *SCP* 9:489-490.

<sup>64</sup> Deposition of Anna Dudley, August 20, 1788, *SCP* 9:472-473; Deposition of Jephthah Earl, August 19, 1788, *Pickering Papers*, 58:110.

<sup>65</sup> Deposition of Daniel Earl and Statement of Solomon Earl, September 13, 1788, *SCP* 9:489-490; Deposition of Isaac Blackmer, August 1, 1788, *Pickering Papers*, 58:75.

After the defection of John Jenkins, apprehension and indecision took hold of the insurgents. Even as they pledged their support to the half-share men, leading radicals scrupulously avoided any personal involvement in the plot. Elisha Satterlee offered to reward kidnappers only after he begged off leading them, saying "that his business was such that he could not undertake it himself." In a similar episode, Gideon Church declined to lead the party, claiming that he had "two hands employed about a [house] frame, & he could not leave them without great damage." Daniel Earl's testimony further highlights the growing apathy of leading Yankee radicals. Earl recalled that Elisha Satterlee would "hardly speak" to his younger brother, Benedict, after he learned that Benedict had volunteered to help kidnap Pickering. Angered by the news, Elisha stated that he "would rather have given all he was worth in the world than that his brother Benedict should have been in the scrape."<sup>66</sup>

Friction between half-share men and leading radicals was not the sole cause of the internal dissent that hobbled Yankee insurgents. On a deeper level, conflicts between backcountry inhabitants' local perspectives and the more ambitious aims of the Susquehannah Company's leading shareholders foiled the kidnapping plot. Wild Yankees maintained close contact with outsiders who took an interest in the survival of the Connecticut claim; however, during the crisis produced by Pickering's capture, these ties proved counterproductive. Not only did half-share men lack effective means of communicating with their distant patrons, but Wyoming's leading radicals became alienated from the outsiders who sought to orchestrate Yankee insurgency.

Conflict between the localism of half-share settlers and the demands of an agrarian insurgency sponsored by the Susquehannah Company paralyzed Yankee resistance in the months following the kidnapping. The kidnappers' lack of good information was symptomatic of the distance that had grown between half-share settlers and their leaders.

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<sup>66</sup> Deposition of Benjamin Earl, July 19, 1788, *SCP* 9: 419-420.

Instead of taking decisive action, the Yankees who held Pickering hid in the woods and sustained themselves on a steady diet of misinformation and hearsay. William Carney recalled how he and his compatriots expected that John Swift and Elisha Satterlee would join them and believed that John McKinstry had ordered Pickering to be taken to the Finger Lakes region of New York. Both of these reports proved groundless. Rumors that John McKinstry would march from New York with five hundred men in support of the half-share men also proved equally fictitious. When these prospects of support evaporated, settlers' disillusionment only deepened.<sup>67</sup>

Misinformation and poor leadership quickly eroded the kidnappers' morale and sapped their resolve to hold Pickering. In the end, the half-share men who carried out the kidnapping took it into their own hands to release their prisoner. The move to free Pickering picked up momentum as the gap widened between Yankee speculators' promises of support and the tangible aid the kidnappers actually received. At one point, eleven of the kidnappers made their way to Tioga Point (a small settlement near the New York-Pennsylvania border that served as the Susquehanna Company's frontier headquarters) to see for themselves if company proprietors would match their pledges of assistance with action. They returned without receiving any satisfaction. Not long after, several members of the party abandoned their comrades and slipped back to their homes; the rest soon gave up Pickering and sought refuge beyond Pennsylvania's borders. Before releasing Pickering, the kidnappers sought his forgiveness and even offered to turn themselves in to state officials if he agreed to intercede on their behalf.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Deposition of William Carney, July 29, 1788, *SCP* 9:432; Deposition of Isaac Blackmer, August 1, 1788, *Pickering Papers*, 58:75; Deposition of Garret Smith, August 7, 1788, *SCP* 9:454.

<sup>68</sup> Deposition of Noah Phelps, August 26, 1788, *SCP* 9:477; Deposition of Ira Manville, July 19, 1788, *Ibid.*, 421; Timothy Pickering to Benjamin Franklin, July 19, 1788, *Ibid.*, 415.



The release of Pickering marked a breakdown in the settler-speculator alliance that had forwarded Yankee resistance since 1785. The kidnappers' sense of betrayal clearly emerges from the testimony they gave after their capture. Kidnapper Joseph Kilborn broke down under cross-examination: at first he claimed that he had no foreknowledge of the plan to take Pickering; however, he later confessed to having "been under a delusion & privy to all that had taken place." Kilborn explained that persons (he would not reveal their names) had convinced him that Pickering's kidnapping would meet with overwhelming support. Only later did he discover that he had been deceived. Likewise, John Hyde pleaded that he had been misled by others, yet, unlike Kilborn, Hyde clearly pinned the blame on John Jenkin's brother Stephen. Hyde exclaimed, "Dam that Villain! If it had not been for him I should never have gone into this scrape," and angrily concluded, "Damn him! It will never do for him to show his head again where I am, for I [would] cudgel him." <sup>69</sup>

As a result of Pickering's kidnapping, half-share men and leading Yankee radicals became alienated from the Susquehannah Company. Men like John Swift, Elisha Satterlee, and Waterman Baldwin withheld their unconditional support from the kidnappers because they mistrusted the outsiders who supported the abduction plot. They perceived that Yankee resistance had moved away from its localist mooring and drifted toward meeting the needs of the Susquehannah Company's non-resident shareholders. Men like John Swift, who based their authority on local standing and personal ties of loyalty, resented their marginalization as leaders by aggressive outsiders such as John McKinstry and Joseph Hamilton.<sup>70</sup> Dissension among Wild Yankees spread even among settlers who had formerly proven themselves wholehearted supporters of the Connecticut claim and the

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<sup>69</sup> Evidence Against Thomas Kinney, Elijah Reynolds, Joseph Earl, Ephraim Tyler, Martin Dudley, and Joseph Kilborn, July 5, 1788, *Pickering Papers*, 58:111; Deposition of William Griffith, August 18, 1788, *SCP* 9:469.

<sup>70</sup> Zebulon Butler to Benjamin Franklin, August 26, 1788, *SCP* 9:479.

Susquehannah Company. Gideon Church, who had promised the kidnappers provisions and advice, turned against them as plans to win John Franklin's release fell into disarray. His defection epitomized the betrayals that undermined settler resistance. Church, who had fought during the Second Pennamite-Yankee War and served as one of John Franklin's chief lieutenants, took up arms against half-share men in 1788. After Pickering had been released, Church led a party of twenty militiamen in search of the kidnappers. Benjamin Earl, who had once sought Church's support, became his prisoner. Half-share men complained of his double dealing, saying that they thought it "hard" of Church to take the side of law and order after having been so "forred to have it [the kidnapping] don."<sup>71</sup>

John Jenkins was both an architect and a victim of the coalition of local and outside interests that structured Yankee insurgency after 1785. He became estranged from his former followers and lost face with the non-resident Susquehannah Company shareholders who had once been his patrons. In the end, John Jenkins left his Wyoming Valley home and fled to the relative safety of the New York frontier where he worked as a surveyor. However, Jenkins did not completely abandon Yankee resistance or the interests of the Susquehannah Company; he, like many other Wild Yankees, only retreated in order to regather his strength and wait for better opportunities in the future.<sup>72</sup>

By the fall of 1788, the furor produced by the kidnapping had died down and Pickering once again presided as Luzerne County's chief official. Meanwhile, the kidnappers and their families sought to piece their lives back together. Most of those involved in the abduction plot ended up before Pennsylvania magistrates. Arron Kilborn, "who had

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<sup>71</sup> Timothy Pickering to Benjamin Franklin, September 24, 1788, *SCP* 9:497; Daniel Earl and others to Timothy Pickering, July or August 1788, *Ibid.*, 442; John Skinner Whitcomb and David Woodward to Timothy Pickering, August 20, 1788, *Ibid.*, 474.

<sup>72</sup> Deposition of Elizabeth Wigton, August 1, 1788, *SCP* 9:443; Timothy Pickering to Benjamin Franklin, July 29, 1788, *Ibid.*, 433; Zebulon Butler to Benjamin Franklin, August 26, 1788, *Ibid.*, 479.

particularly insulted" Pickering, spent a month in jail and faced a seven-pound fine. Zebulon Cady, described as "an atrocious villain," did not receive a fine because of his poverty but spent three months in prison. The rest of the "young men" who had been "misled by the old men" received far lighter sentences. Of the kidnappers' elders, the court acquitted Martin Dudley, Ephraim Taylor, and Nathan Abbot. Darius Parks received a fifty-dollar fine while Thomas Kinney received a one-hundred dollar fine and six-month prison term.<sup>73</sup> John Hyde, Frederick Budd, and others connected to the plot escaped justice by fleeing to New York. Joseph Dudley, who received a mortal gunshot wound during a skirmish with militiamen, became the only fatality associated with the kidnapping.<sup>74</sup>

For Wild Yankees, Pickering's abduction represented an unsuccessful act of rebellion. The unique coalition between the Susquehannah Company and backcountry farmers that had fueled Yankee resistance in the wake of the Second Pennamite-Yankee War faltered internal factionalism among Connecticut claimants and conflicts between settlers' aspirations and the interests of the Susquehannah Company undermined the resolve of Yankee insurgents. On a more personal level, the families who had occupied frontier lands under half-share grants suffered from the role they played in Yankee resistance. The promise of agrarian independence embedded in the Susquehannah Company's offers of free land soured in the atmosphere of disaffection and fear that followed the kidnapping. For the Dudley family, the gamble they took in accepting a half-share grant ended in disaster. Instead of strengthening their family's standing, Martin and Anna Dudley lost their son, Joseph. His death, more than anything else, symbolized how family interests,

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<sup>73</sup> Indictment of Ira Manville and Thirteen Others, September 2, 1788, *SCP* 9:480-482; Timothy Pickering to Samuel Hodgdon, November 9, 1788, *Ibid.*, 516-517

<sup>74</sup> Timothy Pickering's Memorandum on His Abductors, August 7, 1788, *SCP* 9:436-438; Timothy Pickering to Thomas Mifflin, November 15, 1788, *Ibid.*, 517-519; Timothy Pickering to Benjamin Franklin, July 29, 1788, *Ibid.*, 432-436.

agrarian resistance, and the needs of the Susquehannah Company did not always exist in harmony.

The debacle sparked by Pickering's kidnapping did not erase the fact that Yankee settlers and Susquehannah Company proprietors formed close ties, nor did it preclude cooperation between them in the future. Opposition to Pennsylvania's authority and soil rights created a common ground for backcountry inhabitants and land developers. Besides this simple congruence of interests, backcountry inhabitants' ability to integrate agrarian insurgency into familiar patterns of daily life assured the survival of this settler-speculator union. To reconcile the conflict between dependency and independence bound up in their participation in Yankee resistance, settlers turned to a set of familiar relationships, specifically, to a domestic hierarchy that established the authority of yeomen fathers over their household dependents. In sending out young men to take part in resistance activities, Yankees followed a traditional practice whereby farmers maintained their households through the careful management of their sons' labor. In northeast Pennsylvania, Yankee settlers employed this custom to regulate their relationship with the Susquehannah Company and to supply the man-power needed to mount an effective insurgency against Pennsylvania.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> This was not the only time or place in which early American families used the traditional structure of the household economy in an innovative fashion. For example, see Fred Anderson, *A People's Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years' War* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1984), 28-39.

## CHAPTER IV DOCTORS, PHYSIC, & PILLS

*Liberty & Property; or slavery and poverty; are now before us, and our Wisdom and fortitude, or Timidity, and folly, must terminate the matter.*--Ethan Allen, October 27, 1785<sup>1</sup>

On September 10, 1787, the *Connecticut Courant* reported "that a dangerous combination of villains, composed of runaway debtors, criminals, adherents of Shays, &c" had taken up land in Pennsylvania under Connecticut deeds and collected together along the upper reaches of the Susquehanna River. The dissidents, the paper declared, planned to break away from Pennsylvania and "institute *a new state*." In closing, the article drew connections between national affairs and events along the northeast frontier, arguing that the federal government's "want of energy" in dealing with such backcountry troublemakers had led to a crisis in which "all quarters" of the republic saw "*banditties* rising up against law and good order."<sup>2</sup>

Like the newspaper article, this chapter places the Wyoming's dispute in a broader context of frontier unrest in revolutionary America. Previous chapters have examined how face-to-face relationships helped to determine the course of agrarian unrest along the northeast frontier. Now it is time to look at the outside forces and personalities that shaped the region's contest over property and power. Although the focus of this chapter moves away from Yankee settlers, it is not intended to deny the agency of ordinary backcountry inhabitants. Instead, it hopes to make the discussion of settler agency more

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<sup>1</sup> Ethan Allen to Zebulon Butler and Others, October 27, 1785, Robert J. Taylor, ed., *The Susquehannah Company Papers*, 11 vols. (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1969), 8:271 (hereafter cited as *SCP*).

<sup>2</sup> Extract from the *Connecticut Courant*, September 10, 1787, *SCP* 9:188.

meaningful by examining forces originating beyond the bounds of their communities that shaped their perceptions of the world. Localism does not equal isolation; on the contrary, local culture maintained a dynamic dialogue with regional and national events. Indeed, it is impossible to understand the evolution of revolutionary backcountry localism without understanding its relationship with the unrest that marked America's expanding frontier.

Between the outbreak of the revolutionary war and the ratification of the Constitution, frontier inhabitants from Maine to the Carolinas attempted to overthrow government authority and form independent states. Massachusetts yeomen took up arms in 1787 and fought to topple the state's government during Shays' Rebellion. Settlers in the district of Maine, the Hampshire Grants, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North Carolina hatched separatist plots. Most of these uprisings failed, but there were a few notable exceptions. Along the southern frontier, the breakaway state of Franklin led a tumultuous three-year existence until North Carolina managed to subdue its disobedient frontier inhabitants in 1788. During the 1770s and 1780s, settlers in the Hampshire Grants expanded their resistance to New York landlords into a drive for statehood. They attained this goal in 1791 and Vermont gained recognition as the republic's fourteenth state.<sup>3</sup>

After the Revolution, Yankee insurgents grew increasingly aware of agrarian disturbances beyond the northeast frontier. Vermont's bid for independence provided a compelling precedent for Connecticut claimants who sought to establish their autonomy from Pennsylvania. Shays' Rebellion also cast its shadow over the Wyoming region: Pennsylvania officials feared that the Shaysites would spread the contagion of revolt into

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<sup>3</sup> David P. Szatmary, *Shays' Rebellion: The Making of an Agrarian Insurrection* (Amherst: the University of Massachusetts Press, 1980); Peter S. Onuf, *The Origins of the Federal Republic: Jurisdictional Controversies in the United States, 1775-1787* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 70-71, 152, 177-178; Idem., "Liberty, Development, and Union: Visions of the West in the 1780s" *WMQ* 43 (April 1986): 179, 184; Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), 31-38, 51-58.

their state while Yankee settlers hoped that the rebellion would result in the confirmation of their land claims.<sup>4</sup> The "defiant localism" that pervaded the attitudes of rebellious backcountry settlers would seem to preclude the emergence of a consciousness that transcended parochial boundaries, yet this is just what happened. A search for the agents of this translocal awareness leads not only to the settlers who formed the rank and file of agrarian resistance movements, but also toward gentlemen and aggressive land speculators who invested their wealth and energy into frontier development.<sup>5</sup>

The ties that existed between Pennsylvania's Yankee dissidents and groups of frontier agitators in other states challenge the notion that agrarian insurgencies were completely local movements, single-handedly orchestrated by frontier yeomen. The localism that underlay unrest along the northeast frontier did not cut off Wild Yankees from contacts beyond the bounds of their communities or isolate them from the impact of outside events. In fact, the discourse of localism became so powerful in the backcountry that, for a time, it was able to sustain insurgencies that cut across boundaries of class and locality. Indeed, northern Pennsylvania's "dangerous combination of villains" included influential gentlemen who promoted Yankee resistance from distant bases in New England and New York. The northeast frontier, like the rest of the early American backcountry, drew the attention of ambitious men who sought to better their economic and social standing by speculating in frontier lands.<sup>6</sup> Those who sought profits in the wilderness were not above aiding

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<sup>4</sup> Michael A. Bellesiles, *Revolutionary Outlaws: Ethan Allen and the Struggle for Independence on the Early American Frontier* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 249-51; Onuf, *Origins of the Federal Republic*, 62, 67-69, 178.

<sup>5</sup> Gregory H. Nobles, "Breaking into the Backcountry: New Approaches to the Early American Frontier, 1750-1800," *William & Mary Quarterly* 46 (October 1989) 666-667 (hereafter cited as *WMQ*); Alan Taylor, "Agrarian Independence: Northern Land Rioters After the Revolution," in Alfred F. Young ed., *Beyond the American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Univ. Press, 1993), 226, "defiant localism" quoted from pg. 235.

<sup>6</sup> William Herbert Siles, "A Vision of Wealth: Speculators and Settlers in the Genesee Country of New York" (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, 1978), vi, 123; William

rebellious settlers in order to achieve their goals. In turn, backcountry inhabitants were not adverse to aligning themselves with powerful outsiders if it helped them secure land and independence.

Charting the connections between Pennsylvania's Wild Yankees and backcountry disturbances elsewhere in the Northeast highlights how settlement, land speculation, and agrarian insurgency came together in the 1780s. The decade was both a time of great uncertainty over the fate of the American republic and growing expectations as to the possibilities of frontier expansion. These two forces helped to generate frontier unrest and, in so doing, came into dialogue with the localism that underlay backcountry disturbances. An exploration of the wider context of Yankee resistance also forms the first step in assessing the relationship between class and local culture along the revolutionary frontier. Drawing sharp dichotomies between gentlemen and yeomen farmers, backcountry inhabitants and outsiders, local interests and translocal agendas only obscures the frontier's more complex realities. Rather than seeing each other as irreconcilable opponents, Yankee settlers and their speculator allies cooperated in their efforts to settle the upper Susquehanna and oppose Pennsylvania.

### **A New Vermont**

Vermont's fight for independence inspired Wild Yankees throughout the 1780s. For the most part, Vermont's inhabitants only supplied Connecticut claimants with moral support and a symbol of defiance. However, between the summer of 1785 and the fall of 1787, a more substantial relationship developed between the New Englanders and Pennsylvania's Wild Yankees. During that period Vermont's infamous frontier agitator and founding father, Ethan Allen, became involved in the fight to preserve the Connecticut claim.

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Wyckoff, *The Developer's Frontier: The Making of the Western New York Landscape* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1988), 1, 78.



The Susquehannah Company played a leading role in establishing ties between Yankee dissidents and Vermont's insurgents. Indeed, it was the company's determination to win possession of its Indian purchase that brought Ethan Allen to the northeast frontier. Beginning in 1785, the company scoured the Northeast for allies who would help them secure their claim. Thus, a search for the translocal dimensions of Yankee insurgency involves looking beyond the Pennsylvania backcountry and toward the Susquehannah Company's activities in New England and New York.

To Pennsylvania's state government, Vermont represented a dangerous symbol of rebellion; to Yankee insurgents, it stood as an icon of independence. References to Vermont first appeared in the Wyoming Valley during the Second Pennamite-Yankee War. Nervous Pennsylvania settlers reported that a "Vermont party" had joined the Connecticut claimants. Yankees, eager to exploit this anxiety, readily evoked the rebellious spirit of Vermont. For instance, Waterman Baldwin, in one of his many tirades against the government of Pennsylvania, alluded to Vermont's support of the Connecticut claim. He exclaimed, "we will be damn'd if we submit to the laws of this State or any other, but live independant. the Corn we will have, & the ground too. then you will see the Vermonters turn out." On another occasion, Elisha Satterlee expressed his desire to follow in the footsteps of the Hampshire Grants' inhabitants when he stated that Connecticut claimants meant to hold the Wyoming region as a "New Vermont."<sup>7</sup> With the help of the Susquehannah Company, Yankee settlers soon transformed their sense of kinship with Vermont's rebels into more substantial ties with Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys.

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<sup>7</sup> Deposition of William Brink, July 27, 1784, *SCP* 8:8; Deposition of William Sims, September 24, 1784, *Ibid.*, 77; Deposition of Preserved Cooley, January 14, 1785, *Ibid.*, 197.

In the summer of 1785 the Susquehannah Company persuaded the architect of agrarian insurgency in the Hampshire Grants, Ethan Allen, to join them in their struggle against for the northeast frontier. In August the company requested Allen's intervention and asked him to convince his "hardy Vermonters" to journey to the Susquehanna Valley and join the fight against Pennsylvania. Allen took up the challenge and agreed "to speedily repair to Wyoming with a small detachment of green Mountain Boys." In return for his efforts, the Susquehannah Company issued Allen twelve shares (about seven thousand acres) in the Connecticut claim.<sup>8</sup> Allen established contact with Wyoming's leading Connecticut claimants, thus forming a triangular trade of information between Yankee settlers in Pennsylvania, the Susquehannah Company, and Vermont. For example, Doctor Joseph Hamilton, a resident of Hudson, New York and a chief figure in the Susquehannah Company after the Revolution, received a packet of papers from Wyoming and forwarded them to Bennington, Vermont where they had been "perused" by Ethan Allen and then sent to Hartford, Connecticut via prominent company shareholders in eastern New York. On another occasion, Allen used this communication network to offer up some useful advice to Pennsylvania's Wild Yankees. Drawing on his own experience of backwoods insurrection in Vermont, he advised them to "crowd" their settlements, procure arms, and maintain a united front against Pennsylvania. Allen followed up this counsel with a promise to visit the Wyoming Valley.<sup>9</sup>

In the spring of 1786, Allen fulfilled his promise to visit the Pennsylvania. Late in March, Doctor Joseph Hamilton wrote to John Franklin to tell him that he could "depend on a

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<sup>8</sup> Letter to Ethan Allen, August 4, 1785, *SCP* 8:254; Ethan Allen to William Samuel Johnson, August 15, 1785, *Ibid.*, 255-256; Ethan Allen's Receipt for Susquehannah Company Shares, August 19, 1785, *Ibid.*, 256. For insights into Ethan Allen's relationship to the Susquehannah Company and his past speculating efforts in Vermont see: J. Kevin Graffagnino, "'The Country My Soul Dlights In': The Onion River Land Company and the Vermont Frontier," *New England Quarterly* 65 (March 1992): 24-60.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph Hamilton to John Franklin, March 24, 1786, *SCP* 8:310; Ethan Allen to Zebulon Butler and Others, October 27, 1785, *Ibid.*, 271.

visit from Head Doctor from the North." A month later, Allen crossed into Pennsylvania and toured its Yankee settlements. At one point, Allen declared that "he had formed one new State and with one hundred Green Mountain Boys and two hundred Riffle men" he could make another "in defiance of Pennsy<sup>a</sup>." Pennsylvania's governor, Benjamin Franklin, soon got wind of these events. Informants told of Allen's arrival at Wyoming and described how his presence heartened Yankee resistance. Thomas Grant, sheriff of Northumberland County, lamented that with Allen's appearance "every idea of submission" to the state had vanished.<sup>10</sup> However, Ethan Allen soon left Pennsylvania never to return. The "Head Doctor from the North" only stayed in the Wyoming Valley long enough to administer a dose of the belligerent rhetoric he was famous for; it was left to Wild Yankees and the Susquehannah Company to take more substantial measures.

In recruiting Ethan Allen, the Susquehannah Company initiated a process whereby they transformed the Wyoming dispute from a contest between Pennsylvania and its frontier inhabitants into a struggle that would spread beyond the Wyoming Valley and involve the energies and fortunes of settlers and speculators from throughout the Northeast. In order to understand how outsiders like Ethan Allen found their way into the conflict, it is necessary to examine the evolution of the Susquehannah Company.

Before the Susquehannah Company could convert Yankee resistance from a purely local movement to an insurgency that drew support from outside the Wyoming region, it had to first reconfigure itself. The company set forth new policies that revitalized and expanded Yankee opposition in Pennsylvania. Moreover, it rearranged its internal structure, turning away from a highly democratic decision-making process and embracing a more efficient, top-down system that placed power in the hands of a small group of powerful

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<sup>10</sup> Joseph Hamilton to John Franklin, March 24, 1786, *SCP* 8:312-313; William Shaw to Benjamin Franklin and the Pennsylvania Council, May 18, 1786, *Ibid.*, 332; Thomas Grant to Benjamin Franklin, May 20, 1786, *Ibid.*, 335.

shareholders. The company's transformation began on July 13, 1785. Encouraged by Connecticut claimants' bold resistance during the Second Pennamite-Yankee War and tempted by the rising value of frontier lands, company shareholders reaffirmed their commitment to securing the company's Indian purchase. Another factor spurred the company into action: in 1784 Pennsylvania bought the northernmost portion of the state (henceforth known as the "New Purchase") from the Iroquois and passed legislation that opened the territory to purchase and settlement the following year. Now the Susquehannah Company faced the prospect of competing with Pennsylvania claimants not just in the Wyoming Valley but across the whole of the northeast frontier.<sup>11</sup>

At its July 1785 meeting, the company hammered out the policies with which it hoped to regain control of its claim. In addition to passing the half-share resolves, shareholders empowered the company's standing committee "to dispose of Six Hundred Rights" of company lands.<sup>12</sup> By distributing these full shares--totaling some 360,000 acres--among prominent Connecticut claimants, wealthy speculators, and would-be resident proprietors, the company hoped to bolster their influence along the northeast frontier, recruit individuals with the wherewithal to establish new settlements, and gain favor among powerful gentlemen. The company reckoned that its half-share settlers would provide the muscle needed to resist Pennsylvania while whole-share proprietors would furnish the leadership and financial support necessary to forge half-share men into an effective fighting force.

The offer of six hundred full-share rights drew new men to the Susquehannah Company and rekindled the ambitions of many of its long-standing proprietors. Connecticut

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<sup>11</sup> Minutes of a Meeting of the Susquehannah Company, July 13, 1785, *SCP* 8:248-249; Louise Welles Murray, *A History of Old Tioga Point and Early Athens* (Wilkes-Barre, PA: Reader Press, 1907), 253-254; Norman B. Wilkinson, *Land Policy and Speculation in Pennsylvania, 1779-800: A Test of the New Democracy* (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 26, 36-38, 42-43.

<sup>12</sup> Minutes of a Meeting of the Susquehannah Company, July 13, 1785, *SCP* 8:249.

claimants in Pennsylvania obtained a number of full-shares: several went to John Franklin, John Paul Schott, and other men who had led Yankee settlers against Pennsylvania and its land claimants. By handing land rights to these men, the Susquehannah Company hoped to regain the loyalty of Wyoming's chief Connecticut claimants and thereby gain influence over Yankee settlers in Pennsylvania.<sup>13</sup> The company also issued rights to Bezalest Seely, John Morgan, Daniel Douglass, his brother, Israel, and other New Englanders who promised to move to northeast Pennsylvania and support the Connecticut claim.<sup>14</sup> However, it was in New York, not New England, that the Susquehannah Company recruited its most active partisans.

Many of the six hundred whole-share rights ended up in the hands of individuals who inhabited New York's eastern frontier: a swath of territory lying between the Hudson River and the borders of New England. John Jay AcModer, Captain Peter Loop, and Captain John Bortle emigrated from New York to settle rights they obtained from the Susquehannah Company; all of them hailed from Columbia County, a district nestled between the Hudson and the Massachusetts state line.<sup>15</sup> Columbia County, like the rest of New York's eastern frontier, had become home to a large number of New England immigrants during the second half of the eighteenth century. This mixing of Yankees and Yorkers did not occur without conflict: for decades, the New York-New England borderlands experienced many of the same conflicts that troubled northeastern

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<sup>13</sup> Whole shares Nos. 77, 79, 80 granted to John Franklin, May 1 & June 28, 1786, Susquehannah Company Account Books, Liber I:58, Connecticut Historical Society (hereafter cited as SCA); Whole share No. 150 granted to John Paul Schott, January 10, 1786, SCA, Liber C:292.

<sup>14</sup> Whole share No. 154 granted to Bezalest Seely, March 2, 1787, SCA, Liber I:37; Whole share No. 167 issued to John Morgan, December 27, 1786, SCA, Liber C:105; Whole share No. 352 issued to Daniel & Israel Douglas, Ibid., 352.

<sup>15</sup> Whole-shares Nos. 43, 44, and 38 issued to Capt. John Bortle, November 24, 1786, SCA, Liber I:28; Whole-share No. 82 issued to Capt. Peter Loop, November 24, 1786, Ibid., 28; Whole share No. 32 issued to John Jay AcModer, September 28, 1786, Ibid., 168.

Pennsylvania. Overlapping jurisdictions, mob violence, and disputed soil rights shaped the Yankee communities east of the Hudson River. Thus, with its offer of land, the Susquehannah Company recruited new members from a region whose turbulent history of land disputes and agrarian revolt had taught in predominantly New England-born inhabitants that conflict could translate into an opportunity for land acquisition.<sup>16</sup>

A group of New York speculators came to dominate company policy after the Revolution. Doctor Caleb Benton of Hillsdale, Doctor Joseph Hamilton of Hudson, and Zerah Beach of Amenia, New York won positions of authority within the Susquehannah Company and obtained scores of company shares.<sup>17</sup> In November 1786, Caleb Benton gained the rights to four full townships equaling fifty-six-thousand acres and six "pitches" (tracts of land outside a town grant) containing several thousand more. Likewise, Joseph Hamilton obtained twenty-five full shares totaling some fifteen thousand acres. Zerah Beach, like the other two members of the New York triumvirate, matched such land acquisitions with his growing power in the Susquehannah Company.<sup>18</sup> These three men pushed forward changes in the company that concentrated power in their hands. In July 1785, shareholders voted to add twelve men to the company's standing committee; among the new members were Joseph Hamilton, Zerah Beach, and John Franklin. This committee

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<sup>16</sup> Oscar Handlin, "The Eastern Frontier of New York," *New York History* 18 (January 1937): 50-75; David M. Ellis, "Yankee-Dutch Confrontation in the Albany Area," *New England Quarterly* 45 (June 1972): 262-270; David J. Goodall, "New Light on the Border: New England Squatter Settlements in New York During the American Revolution," (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Albany, 1984), 79. For an in-depth view of the political dimension of jurisdictional disputes along the New York-Massachusetts border refer to Schwarz, *The Jarring Interests*, 74-81, 97-131, 191-210.

<sup>17</sup> Newton Reed, *Early History of Amenia* (Amenia, New York: DeLacey & Wiley, Printers, 1875), 81, 120; For shares held by the New Yorkers see: "600 Whole Share Proprietors," SCA, Liber A. For offices held by Benton, Hamilton, and Beach see: Minutes of a Meeting of the Susquehannah Company, December 26, 1786, SCP 8:426.

<sup>18</sup> John Franklin to Joseph Hamilton, November 25, 1786, SCP 8:421; John Franklin to Joseph Hamilton, June 8, 1786, Ibid., 358; Ebenezer Bowman to Timothy Pickering, October 21, 1787, SCP 9:248.

held important power: it issued the six hundred whole-share and four hundred half-share rights authorized by the company. Over the course of the following year, Hamilton, Beach, Franklin, and Benton consolidated their position and orchestrated more innovations in company policy.<sup>19</sup>

The Susquehannah Company reached a milestone in its conversion from an institution modeled after New England's seventeenth-century town corporations to an organization geared toward frontier insurgency and land speculation with the creation of a four-man executive committee in the spring of 1786. During a May meeting, company shareholders empowered John Franklin, Ethan Allen, John Jenkins, and Zebulon Butler to locate new townships within the company purchase and to resolve land conflicts between Connecticut claimants. Just as important, John Franklin became the company's clerk, giving him access to company records and all of its business. This move continued a trend in which power within the Susquehannah Company slipped away from its shareholders in Connecticut and came into the hands of Yankee hard-liners in Pennsylvania and New York. Before 1786 only an assembly of company shareholders at a general meeting could grant new townships and issue rights. Afterwards, these important decisions fell into the hands of Yankee radicals who dominated the company's executive committee. The company gained administrative efficiency, but it did so at the expense of the democratic spirit that had characterized its political structure since 1753.<sup>20</sup>

After 1786 the seat of company authority shifted from Hartford, Connecticut to eastern New York and Yankee settlements in Pennsylvania. At a meeting held in December, the Susquehannah Company expanded its executive committee to create a twenty-two-member commission. As with the previous committee, the commission took charge of granting new towns, issuing whole- and half-share rights, and judging the

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<sup>19</sup> Minuets of a Meeting of the Susquehannah Company, July 13, 1785, *SCP* 8:249.

<sup>20</sup> Minutes of a Meeting of the Susquehannah Company, May 17, 1786, *SCP* 9:331, 331 n. 4.

legitimacy of shareholders' claims. William Judd of Farmington, Connecticut and other members of the Susquehannah Company who supported the company's aggressive stance became members of the commission. However, Yankee radicals who resided along the Susquehanna and New York speculators who obtained land under the Connecticut claim became the body's most active members. John Franklin, Simon Spalding, John Jenkins, Zebulon Butler, and John Paul Schott numbered among the former, while Joseph Hamilton, Zerah Beach, John Bortle, and Peter Loop led the latter.<sup>21</sup>

The Susquehannah Company's transformation took place during a time of great uncertainty in the United States. Frontier separatist movements and agrarian insurrections plagued the republic after the Revolution. Unrest in the backcountry created an atmosphere of crisis that encouraged Pennsylvania officials to view Yankee resistance as treason of the darkest dye and that caused Connecticut claimants to contemplate drastic measures in their battle for land and autonomy.

**"to klink up a Bubbery."**

In the winter of 1786-87, a massive agrarian insurrection threw Massachusetts into chaos. Yeomen in the central and western parts of the state, having suffered from high taxes, crushing debt, and an unsympathetic government, styled themselves "regulators" and took up arms. Massachusetts farmers went beyond petitioning and protest to embark upon a rebellion that aimed at bringing down the state government. Daniel Shays, a resident of Hampshire County and a veteran officer of the Continental Army, became the uprising's leading figure. Shays' Rebellion--also known as the Massachusetts Regulation--never spread far beyond the state's borders, but its impact was felt across the early republic.

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<sup>21</sup> Minutes of a Meeting of the Susquehannah Company, December 26, 1786, *SCP* 8:426-428.



The Massachusetts Regulation helped to reformulate perceptions of agrarian unrest along the northeast frontier. By the late 1780s, Yankee insurgents' fight for property and autonomy became tied to a struggle that extended far beyond the hills and river valleys of the Susquehanna Valley. Shays' Rebellion and frontier insurrection in New York created an atmosphere in which separatist plots flourished. Pennsylvania's Wild Yankees did not hatch these plans on their own; like the news of Shays' Rebellion, the impetus behind Wyoming's new-state schemes came out of the north from New York and New England.

Early in 1787, reports began to filter into Pennsylvania describing widespread dissent and rebellion in Massachusetts. In February, Timothy Hosmer of Farmington, Connecticut sent a letter to John Paul Schott that detailed the uprising. Hosmer wrote that discord in Massachusetts had grown into a "Serious War" and predicted that the rebellion would spread across state lines and throw New England into confusion. Later that month, Timothy Pickering received word that the "mob Party" in Massachusetts would likely gain the upper hand and ignite a "General Revolution" throughout the United States. In May another report reached Pickering. It claimed that the Shaysites' had defeated a government army at Springfield and would soon be reinforced by eight thousand British troops from Canada.<sup>22</sup> These letters mixed a small degree of truth with a large dose of falsehood, but no matter what their accuracy, they demonstrate that Shays' Rebellion weighed on the minds of Wyoming inhabitants.

Connecticut claimants paid close attention to the Massachusetts Regulation because they believed that no matter what turn events took, northeast Pennsylvania would be buffeted by the consequences. Joseph Sprague, an inhabitant of Wilkes-Barre, argued that "if the moob Succeeds the Consequenc will be the disalution of Feederal government" and claimed

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<sup>22</sup> Timothy Hosmer to John Paul Schott, February 2, 1787, *SCP* 9:21-22; William Hooker Smith to Timothy Pickering, February 21, 1787, *Ibid.*, 67; William Hooker Smith to Timothy Pickering, May 1, 1787, *Ibid.*, 118-119.

that if the Shaysites failed, thousands of rebels would flee Massachusetts and "Take Aselum" in the Wyoming region. Like Sprague, many Yankee settlers reckoned that if the government of Massachusetts won, large numbers of rebel refugees would emigrate to Pennsylvania in support of the Connecticut claim. They also believed that if the rebels succeeded, the United States would be dissolved and Connecticut claimants would be able to establish their autonomy. Susquehannah Company stalwart, William Judd, echoed these expectations. In a highly inflammatory letter sent to Zebulon Butler, Judd asserted that the United States was "upon its last Leggs" and predicted that Connecticut claimants would "stand an Equal Chance with the rest of mankind" to establish their independence after the collapse of the federal government.<sup>23</sup>

As with the scare created by Ethan Allen's visit to the Wyoming Valley, the fears and hopes that surrounded Shays' Rebellion proved groundless. In the winter of 1787, a government army defeated the Massachusetts regulators and set about restoring order to the western parts of the state. The large-scale migration of rebel refugees to northeast Pennsylvania never materialized, but a Shaysite diaspora did occur. Perhaps as many as three thousand rebels fled Massachusetts--most went to New York, Vermont, and other New England States. It was the idea of rebellion, not the rebels themselves, that reached northeast Pennsylvania.

Though the direct impact of the Massachusetts Regulation was limited, the uprising did have a significant effect on how contemporaries perceived agrarian disturbances along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier. In the wake of Shays' Rebellion, Pennsylvania officials came to believe that Wild Yankees planned to disrupt the province with armed uprisings and a bid for independent statehood. Timothy Pickering likened John Franklin to Daniel Shays and warned that "the dangerous insurrections in Massachusetts" had convinced him

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<sup>23</sup> Timothy Hosmer to John Paul Schott, February 2, 1787, *SCP* 9:21-22; Dr. Joseph Sprague to Timothy Pickering, February 20, 1787, *Ibid.*, 64; William Judd to Zebulon Butler, January 11, 1787, *Ibid.*, 6.

that Pennsylvania's Wild Yankees posed a serious threat to the stability of the nation. Pickering held that "the discontents in Luzerne" did not only emerge from local conditions, but also arose out of "peculiar circumstances" that prevailed across the United States--circumstances that encouraged "bad men" to "excite the common people to rebellion & to attempt the erecting of New States."<sup>24</sup>

Between 1786 and 1788, rumors of separatist plots and insurrection beset Pennsylvania's northeast frontier. Anxiety over the formation of a break-away state came to a climax in the fall of 1787 and only subsided the following summer. Although state officials gathered evidence pointing to a separatist scheme, the exact nature of Yankee intentions remained unclear. However inconclusive, evidence pointing Yankee schemes for independent statehood sheds light on a significant feature in the development of the Wyoming dispute: after 1785, Yankee resistance was no longer a purely local movement managed by settlers. Indeed, prominent non-resident members of the Susquehannah Company became a driving force behind agrarian insurrection and separatist sentiment along the northeast frontier.

In 1785 Pennsylvania officials began to fear that outside agitators would spark a full-scale rebellion in the Wyoming region; by 1786 this apprehension had evolved into the belief that Yankees planned to form a independent frontier state out of portions of Pennsylvania and New York. With the reentry of the Susquehannah Company into the Wyoming dispute, Pennsylvania officials began to see Yankee insurgency not as a local movement but as a New England-based separatist conspiracy. In December 1785, Pennsylvania's governor and council received word that "a large quantity of military stores" had been purchased by Susquehannah Company agents and housed at Fishkill, New York for delivery to Yankee settlers. The government had little doubt that these arms were meant to aid Connecticut claimants in their fight against Pennsylvania. Reacting

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<sup>24</sup> Timothy Pickering to John Pickering, August 4, 1788, *SCP* 9:446-447; Timothy Pickering to George Clymer, November 1, 1787, *Ibid.*, 255-256.

to these reports, the state took measures to intercept the armaments and moved to raise troops to quash any uprising.<sup>25</sup> In May 1786, William Montgomery, a member of Pennsylvania's Council of Censors, informed Chief Justice Thomas McKean that there existed "the greatest & most imminent danger of a dismemberment of the State" by Yankee insurgents. He pointed out John Franklin, Solomon Strong, and Ethan Allen and the leaders of the separatist plot and assured McKean that "the most limited claim of the Schemers" was to hold all of Pennsylvania north of the forty-second degree of latitude. Days later, Benjamin Franklin wrote to New York's governor, George Clinton, repeating Montgomery's account and magnifying it. Franklin stated that the insurgents, in addition to coveting the northern third of Pennsylvania, planned to include parts of central and western New York in their frontier republic.<sup>26</sup>

Intelligence received from Yankee moderates helped to increase the state's anxiety over separatist plots. Days before William Montgomery delivered his shocking report to the government, he received word from William Hooker Smith that Yankee radicals planned to form a state from parts of Pennsylvania and New York. Smith labeled John Franklin, Solomon Strong, John Jenkins, and Christopher Hurlbut as the plot's ringleaders and claimed that Strong had traveled back and forth between Wyoming and Vermont in order to keep Ethan Allen abreast of their plans. Smith also accused James Finn, a Baptist preacher from Pittston, of taking part in the conspiracy. He stated that Finn had gone to the West Branch of the Susquehanna "to preach about amongst The people Thare, and

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<sup>25</sup> John Bayard and Charles Pettit to John Dickinson, December 31, 1785, *SCP* 8:284; Charles Biddle to John Bayard and Charles Pettit, January 6, 1786, *Ibid.*, 285; Debate in the Pennsylvania General Assembly on the Wyoming Disturbances, March 9, 1786, *Ibid.*, 298; John Armstrong to Alexander Patterson, Samuel Hazard, ed. *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser. (Philadelphia: Joseph Severns & Co., 1854), 11:457.

<sup>26</sup> William Montgomery to the Pennsylvania Council, May 20, 1786, *SCP* 8:336; William Montgomery to Thomas McKean, May 20, 1786, *Ibid.*, 337; Benjamin Franklin to George Clinton, June 1, 1786, *Ibid.*, 357. For similar testimony see Joseph Sprague to the Pennsylvania Council, November 25, 1786, *Ibid.*, 420-421.

feale out Thare minds, In Reguard To a New State."<sup>27</sup> Timothy Pickering believed that John Franklin promoted resistance to the Confirming Act in order to stall the resolution of the Wyoming dispute till his plan to form an independent state had "grown riper." On another occasion, Pickering assured his Philadelphia-based business partner, Samuel Hodgdon, that Yankees contemplated separation from Pennsylvania. Timothy Pickering, like other state officials, cobbled together a conspiratorial view of Yankee aims from rumors, hearsay, and dubious information supplied by moderates who opposed John Franklin's growing influence. One anonymous informant told Pickering that radicals planned an armed uprising against the state and had placed arms and ammunition "in convenient places" for that purpose.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, such reports convinced the state to order the arrest of John Franklin and other leading radicals in the fall of 1787.

For all of the state's accusations, it remained unclear if the Susquehannah Company and Wild Yankees had developed any clear plans for independence. Instead of hard evidence, company officials and Yankee settlers left a trail of cryptic references and innuendo. Correspondence between John Franklin and Joseph Hamilton hinted at their intentions but never spelled out exactly what they were. In a letter dated March 24, 1786, Hamilton told Franklin that arguments in favor of the Connecticut claim would not succeed unless they were "set home" by a "quick operating Phisic." Hamilton never specified what this medicine was, but assured Franklin that if he and his followers administered it skillfully they would "be all good Doctors." Franklin continued this coded exchange when he asked Hamilton to "Procure the Phisic and Pills" they had discussed at Hartford and send them

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<sup>27</sup> William Hooker Smith, Samuel Hover, and Abraham Westbrook to William Montgomery, May 14, 1786, *SCP* 8:326-327; Oscar Jewell Harvey and Ernest Gray Smith, *A History of Wilkes-Barre*, 6 vols. (Wilkes-Barre, PA: The Raeder Co., 1927), 3:1505-1507; Stewart Pearce, *Annals of Luzerne County* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1866), 300-301.

<sup>28</sup> Timothy Pickering to Samuel Hodgdon, August 12, 1787, *SCP* 9:161; Information Regarding the Designs of John Franklin, April 22, 1787, *Ibid.*, 110.

to Wyoming. Franklin promised that he would "Administer them if Necessary," assuring Hamilton that, though he was unfamiliar with the "Theory of Physic," he knew much about its practical application. Though the exact meaning of these letters is difficult to decipher, it is likely that they refer to arms and ammunition the Susquehannah Company had appropriated for Wild Yankees. However, the letters do not specify to what end the weapons were to be used.<sup>29</sup>

Even the most damning evidence pointing to Yankees' separatist designs, when examined closely, lacks conclusiveness. Pennsylvania authorities accused William Judd and other Susquehannah Company proprietors of having drawn up a constitution for a planned break-away state. Timothy Pickering, who believed such a document existed, asserted that its authors "lived in the states of Connecticut & New York" and claimed that "Westmoreland" was to be the name of the new state. Moreover, John Shepard, a resident of Athens and an active member of the Susquehannah Company, testified that he overheard John Franklin, Zerah Beach, John McKinstry, and Benjamin Allen reading the constitution.<sup>30</sup> However, state officials never gained a detailed description of Westmoreland's constitution nor discovered a copy of the document.

However elusive the truth about Yankee intentions, one thing became clear: the most pressing calls for violent resistance came not only from Wild Yankees but from a group of prominent New York speculators. On several occasions, Doctor Joseph Hamilton and his associates prodded John Franklin to take up arms against Pennsylvania. Less than a month before his arrest, Franklin received a letter from Hamilton warning him that "principle & leading characters" in New York did not believe that he would be able "to klink up a

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<sup>29</sup> Joseph Hamilton to John Franklin, March 24, 1786, *SCP* 8:312; John Franklin to Joseph Hamilton, June 8, 1786, *Ibid.*, 358-359.

<sup>30</sup> Obadiah Gore to Timothy Pickering, November 12, 1787, *SCP* 9:266-267; Mathias Hollenback to John Nicholson, November 13, 1787, *Ibid.*, 272; Timothy Pickering to John Pickering, November 17, 1787, *Ibid.*, 285; Deposition of John Shepard, November 9, 1788, *Ibid.*, 515; Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1617-1618.

Bubbery" (cause a disturbance) sufficient to overturn state rule. As he had done in the past, Hamilton shrouded demands for violent action with innuendo. Hamilton told Franklin that he had known many patients with "a high inflammatory fever, being attended by a timid physician who darenot let blood, suffer the dissolution of his whole body barely for want of drawing a little Blood." He chided Franklin his followers for being "jockeyed" and "trucked" out of their lands without the "flash of a single Gun rifle or any of the least resistance." Hamilton promised the financial support of his associates in New York but warned that "no righteous wheel" would move till Wild Yankees took decisive action.<sup>31</sup>

Doctor Joseph Hamilton--a well-heeled speculator from New York--may seem an unlikely architect of settler resistance but his position was far from unique. Hamilton was only one of many land developers who took a hand in generating unrest along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier. The involvement of these "outsiders" raises several questions about the nature of agrarian resistance in the early republic. Above all, it calls into doubt the notion that backcountry disputes over property and power inevitably pitted settlers against speculators and brought the local culture of agrarian America into irreconcilable conflict with the imperatives of an emerging commercial social order.

Settlers and speculators have often been portrayed as opponents. Indeed, the unrest that plagued post-revolutionary America and culminated in Shays' Rebellion has been interpreted as a product of cultural and class tensions between yeomen who desired to set up frontier freeholds and gentlemen who wished to reserve the backcountry for their own profit.<sup>32</sup> Though conflict did erupt between farmers and land developers along the

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<sup>31</sup> Timothy Pickering to John Swift, October 9, 1787, *SCP* 9:234; Joseph Hamilton to John Franklin, September 10, 1787, *Ibid.*, 185; Joseph Hamilton to John Franklin, September 10, 1787, *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>32</sup> Szatmary, *Shays' Rebellion*, 1, 16-17; Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 65.

frontier, such contention did not bar the two from forming more constructive relationships.

Along the northeast frontier, settlers and speculators, local interests and translocal agendas, came together to promote agrarian insurgency. To understand the role speculators played in Yankee resistance, it is first necessary to explore their ties with the Susquehannah Company. The move to resurrect the Connecticut claim rested upon the efforts of a few men. John Franklin, John Jenkins, William Judd, Solomon Strong, Caleb Benton, and Joseph Hamilton charted the company's course through the 1780s.<sup>33</sup> These same men consistently appeared in accounts of settler unrest and new-state plots along the Pennsylvania frontier. John Franklin and John Jenkins are familiar characters in the Wyoming dispute; the others require a closer look before their involvement in the struggle can be fully appreciated.

The power and influence the Susquehannah Company wielded along the northeast frontier rested on longstanding local relationships. William Judd, Doctor Joseph Hamilton, and Zerah Beach, who, at first glance, appear as aggressive newcomers to northeast Pennsylvania, did, in fact, possess longstanding ties to the region. Hamilton, though he resided in New York after the Revolution, was born in Sharon, Connecticut, purchased a right in the Susquehannah Company in 1773, and briefly resided in the Wyoming Valley before fleeing the frontier in 1778. Hamilton returned to Connecticut and then moved to Hudson, New York in 1785. From his new home, he pushed for the Susquehannah Company to reassert its claim and renewed his ties with Wyoming's settlers. A native of Farmington, Connecticut, William Judd purchased rights in the Susquehannah Company

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<sup>33</sup> The role that land speculators played in sparking settler unrest in northeast Pennsylvania and across the American backcountry is addressed in Alan Taylor, "'To Man Their Rights': The Frontier Revolution," in Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, ed., *The Transforming Hand of Revolution: Reconsidering the American Revolution as a Social Movement* (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1995), 231-257, especially pgs. 246-253.



before the Revolution and moved to the Pennsylvania frontier only to return to New England after being ejected from the West Branch of the Susquehanna by Pennamites. Judd, who had been an active member of the Susquehannah Company before the Trenton Decree, became one of its chief shareholders after 1785.<sup>34</sup> Zerah Beach possessed a similar background. He joined the Susquehannah Company and was a prominent inhabitant of the Wyoming Valley before the revolutionary war. Even after he left the valley, Beach maintained close ties with Yankee settlers during the Second Pennamite-Yankee War.<sup>35</sup>

Like Hamilton, Judd, and Beach, Solomon Strong demonstrates that it is misleading to categorize the Susquehannah Company's supporters as speculators or settlers, insiders or outsiders. On the surface, Solomon Strong seemed to be the sort of frontier opportunist Pennsylvania accused of fomenting rebellion along the northeast frontier. Strong's name repeatedly turned up in reports describing Yankee new-state plots. Moreover, in December 1786, New York accused him of "counterfeiting Dollars" and sought his arrest. Strong fled from his home in Claverack, New York and sought refuge among Pennsylvania's Yankee settlers.<sup>36</sup> Strong's fugitive status and his association with separatist schemes, though they highlight some aspects of Strong's character, do little to explain his relationship to Pennsylvania's Yankee inhabitants. No stranger to the Wyoming Valley, Solomon Strong had settled along the Susquehanna in 1773 and represented Westmoreland County in Connecticut's legislature in 1776. During the Revolution he led Westmoreland's inhabitants as a captain in the Connecticut Line. After the Battle of Wyoming, Strong returned to his home state of Connecticut and took up residence in Berkshire County, Massachusetts. In 1782 he moved to Claverack, New York where he

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<sup>34</sup> Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1569-1570; *Ibid.*, 2:824.

<sup>35</sup> John Franklin's Diary, July 3 to December 7, 1784, *SCP* 8:158; John Franklin's Diary, July 1 to November 15, 1785, *Ibid.*, 276-278.

<sup>36</sup> Solomon Strong to Zebulon Butler, April 22, 1786, *SCP* 8:316; George Clinton to Benjamin Franklin, December 13, 1786, *Ibid.*, 423.

reacquainted himself with an old friend and business associate from the Wyoming Valley, Jeremiah Hogeboom.<sup>37</sup>

The Susquehannah Company's reentry into the Wyoming dispute may have brought new players into the contest over the northeast frontier, but it did not change the fundamentals of Yankee insurgency: resistance and the expansion of company settlements continued to rest on the pursuit of property and independence. Solomon Strong and Jeremiah Hogeboom were two of the many aspiring speculators who sought to capitalize on the revival of the Connecticut claim. However, land developers could not hope to profit from agrarian insurgency in northeast Pennsylvania without catering to the needs of Yankee settlers. Before the Revolution, Strong and Hogeboom had acted as agents for a group of proprietors who obtained a town grant from the company. The town, named Claverack, was surveyed but never settled because of the disruptions caused by the revolutionary war. In December 1785, the Susquehannah Company regranted Claverack to Strong and Hogeboom with the stipulation that the partners have twenty settlers in the town by May 1, 1786.<sup>38</sup> Hoping to attract inhabitants, the partners offered one hundred acres free of charge to any settler who would occupy the town. Arnold Franklin, a half-share man, was among the first to seat his family in "Strong and Hogeboom's town." Drawing on their New York connections, Strong and Hogeboom attracted Ezra Rutty and his oldest son, Ezra Jr., from Pawlings Precinct in Dutchess County, New York. Jonas Smith and his son, Nathan, Daniel Guthry, and Isaac, Rufus, and Abial Foster soon followed.<sup>39</sup> Recruiting settlers brought Strong and Hogeboom closer to the confirmation of their land claims but it also helped many frontier immigrants obtain land.

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<sup>37</sup> Pearce, *Annals of Luzerne County*, 78; Harvey & Smithy, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1498.

<sup>38</sup> Harvey, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1498; David Craft, *History of Bradford County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co., 1878), 85.

<sup>39</sup> Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 324, 362-363.

Solomon Strong and Jeremiah Hogeboom's reentry into the Wyoming dispute exemplifies the complex relationship that existed between the Susquehannah Company and frontier inhabitants. As was the case with the settlement of Claverack, company-sponsored land development schemes could succeed only by nurturing the development of backcountry communities. For instance, Caleb Benton took the shares he received from the company, laid them out in several towns, and attracted settlers to his lands.<sup>40</sup> Likewise, Zerah Beach and Joseph Hamilton served their interests, the Connecticut claim, and the needs of Yankee settlers by converting their company shares into settlements.<sup>41</sup> John Jay AcModer followed a similar path: he purchased thirty-two whole share rights from Joseph Hamilton, developed company towns along the Pennsylvania-New York border, and acted as an agent in Benton's, Hamilton's, and Beach's efforts seat settlers on their lands.<sup>42</sup>

What separated Susquehannah Company speculators from Yankee settlers was not that they lacked close personal ties to the northeast frontier, but that they participated in ventures that went beyond these local relationships. Joseph Hamilton and Caleb Benton did not limit their speculating efforts to the Susquehannah Purchase but involved themselves in extensive land developing schemes elsewhere along the frontier. Indeed, Benton's and Hamilton's involvement in the Wyoming region was but an extension of their main interests to the north. The two men joined the Susquehannah Company in hopes of

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<sup>40</sup> Town grants of Hamilton, Goresburgh, Johnson, and Bentonsburg, November 24, 1786, SCA Liber I:18-24; Pitches laid out for Caleb Benton, November 24, 1786, Ibid., 26-27; John Franklin to Joseph Hamilton, November 25, 1786, SCP 8:421; Murray, *History of Old Tioga*, 311-312.

<sup>41</sup> For details on Beach and Hamilton's land dealings see "600 Whole Share Proprietors," SCA, Liber A; Zerah Beach to Zebulon Butler, September 21, 1785, SCP 8:262; Zerah Beach to John Franklin, September 14, 1787, SCP 9:192-193; and John Franklin to Caleb Benton, June 26, 1787, Ibid., 147.

<sup>42</sup> Timothy Pickering to Samuel Hodgdon, August 9, 1787, SCP 9:154; Obadiah Gore and Mathias Hollenback to Timothy Pickering, July 3, 1787, Ibid., 149-150; Deposition of John Jay AcModer, December 22, 1788, Ibid., 524-525.

engrossing lands in Pennsylvania and, more important, of improving their ability to secure title to disputed lands they claimed in New York.

### **The York Lessees**

Pennsylvania's northeast frontier attracted a new breed of frontier agitator: prominent landholders and would-be speculators who merged the pursuit of profit with opposition to government authority. In particular, the entrance of a group of New York speculators known as the "Lessees" into the Wyoming dispute helped to revitalize and expand resistance to Pennsylvania's authority. Backcountry disputes over land and authority generated social conflict but not necessarily class conflict. Yeomen and gentlemen found common ground in their allegiance to the Connecticut claim and their opposition to Pennsylvania. This convergence of interests reflects a deeper truth: settlers and speculators, rather than representing distinct frontier types, frequently combined the agrarian aspirations of the former with the commercial opportunism of the latter.

A number of enterprising New York speculators took the lead in linking Yankee settlers' localist insurgency to a wider offensive against government authority along the frontier. In the winter of 1787-88, a group of ambitious men formed the New York Genesee Land Company after obtaining a 999-year lease from the Seneca, Onondaga, and Oneida Indians. The lease included millions of acres of land and covered almost all of central and western New York. Doctor Caleb Benton, Benjamin Allen, John Bortle, Peter Loop, Doctor Joseph Hamilton, Obediah Gore, Stephen Hogeboom, John McKinstry, Simon Spalding, and other individuals involved in the Connecticut claim numbered among the company's members. Kanadesaga, a small settlement along the shores of Seneca Lake, became the Lessees' backcountry headquarters.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1499; Orsamus Turner, *History of the*

New York quickly took measures to counteract the Lessees' attempt to engross state lands. In February 1788, Governor George Clinton declared the New York Genesee Company's lease invalid since the purchase or lease of Indian land without the approval of the state was illegal. By March, Clinton had issued a proclamation forbidding settlers to take up lands under the Lessees and arranged for state troops to drive off anyone who ignored the warning. The government acted not only to maintain its authority over settlers and territory but to break the Lessees' influence among the Iroquois.<sup>44</sup>

Rather than backing down, the Lessees fought the state for control of the New York frontier. In the fall of 1788, Governor Clinton received word that the Lessees had sabotaged government efforts to purchase Iroquois lands during treaty negotiations at Fort Schuyler by keeping a number of Indian chiefs "in a continual state of Intoxication" at a counter meeting in Kanadesaga. When Clinton sent state authorities to retrieve the chiefs and break up the Lessees' gathering, Caleb Benton and John McKinstry met them at the head of thirty riflemen and, with "severe threats," forced their retreat. This setback was only temporary: by 1789 New York had convinced the Iroquois to revoke the Genesee Company's lease and arrested several of the company's members for treason.<sup>45</sup> However, the Lessees continued to resist state authority by harassing its surveyors, impeding its negotiations with the Iroquois, and encouraging New York's backcountry settlers to form a new state. Late in 1788, surveyors working for New York and its landholders began to encounter resistance from Lessee settlers. By the summer of 1789, settler opposition to

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*Pioneer Settlement of Phelps & Gorham's Purchase, and Morris' Reserve* (Rochester: William Alling, 1852), 106-107; Siles, "A Vision of Wealth," 35-37; Franklin B. Hough, ed., *Proceedings of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs Appointed by Law For the Extinguishment of Indian Titles in the State of New York* (Albany: Joel Munsell, 1861), 119-120, 122.

<sup>44</sup> Siles, "A Vision of Wealth," 38-39; Turner, *Pioneer Settlement*, 106-107.

<sup>45</sup> Peter Ryckman to Seth Reed, October 7, 1788, *Proceedings of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs*, 258-259; Turner, *Pioneer Settlement*, 112, 116-117; Siles, "A Vision of Wealth," 68-69.

state surveying parties intensified to the point that Governor Clinton had to equip them with arms and ammunition.<sup>46</sup>

The Lessees' last bid for supremacy took the form of a separatist plot. As early as the summer of 1787, the Lessees had contemplated forming a new state to secure their lease of Indian lands. Their plans came out into the open in November 1793 when settlers loyal to the Genesee Company gathered at Kanadesaga and agreed to form a frontier state out of New York's Otsego, Tioga, Herkimer, and Ontario counties. Circulars signed by Caleb Benton and other prominent Lessees made their way through the backcountry proclaiming the meeting's resolves. The Lessees' separatist plans came to naught: wary government officials and settlers who held frontier lands under legitimate New York titles put down the new state movement before it could gain any momentum.<sup>47</sup>

The Lessees' attempt to form a break-away republic in the New York backcountry was not the first time they dabbled in state-making: these same speculators had also encouraged talk of independence among Connecticut claimants. In orchestrating settler unrest in New York, the Lessees' drew upon experience they had gained promoting agrarian insurgency along the Pennsylvania frontier. Caleb Benton, Joseph Hamilton, John McKinstry, and other Lessees stood behind Pennsylvania's Wild Yankees and assisted them in some of their earliest and most provocative acts of insurgency.

Northeast Pennsylvania's new-state plot and events surrounding the abduction of Timothy Pickering highlight the conspicuous part the Lessees played in promoting Yankee insurgency. Less than three years after the Trenton Decree, a number of New Yorkers,

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<sup>46</sup> Turner, *Pioneer Settlement*, 120; Siles, "A Vision of Wealth," 66; Simon DeWitt to George Clinton, July 11, 1789--containing extracts from a letter of Captain Abraham Hardenbergh, July 5, 1789, *Proceedings of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs*, 433; George Clinton to Captain Abraham Hardenbergh, July 14, 1789, *Ibid.*, 459.

<sup>47</sup> Julian P. Boyd, "Attempts to Form New States in New York and Pennsylvania, 1786-96" *New York State Historical Association Quarterly Journal*, 12 (July 1931): 264-266.

many of whom would later form the Genesee Company, took an interest in reviving the Connecticut claim. Their influence within the company gained official recognition in December 1786 when shareholders appointed Hamilton and several of his associates to the company's executive commission. From this point on, the plans of the Susquehannah Company's and the designs of these New York speculators became closely intertwined.<sup>48</sup> The Lessees' involvement with Yankee insurgents became apparent to Pennsylvania authorities investigating Wyoming's separatist conspiracies. State officials asserted that John Franklin, Zerah Beach, and a number of "*sedition villains*" from the New York Genesee Company had gathered at Athens in the summer of 1787 to "consult on a plan for forming an independent state."<sup>49</sup> On September 25, 1787, the state charged John Franklin, John Jenkins, and Zerah Beach with treason; also among the accused was the Lessees' chief agent, John McKinstry. The warrant issued for their arrest stated that the four men "did summon invite and endeavor to persuade" Wyoming's inhabitants "to assemble & join themselves together against the Commonwealth" and erect their own state.<sup>50</sup> During their trial, John Jay AcModer gave testimony that further revealed the Lessees' involvement in the separatist plot. In particular, AcModer claimed that Joseph Hamilton, Caleb Benton, John McKinstry--in concert with Ethan Allen, William Judd, and John Franklin--had "explicitly declared" their determination to "erect a new State" out of portions of Pennsylvania and New York.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Murray, *History of Old Tioga*, 283; Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1476-1477; Boyd, "Attempts to Form New States," 263.

<sup>49</sup> Deposition of Tunes Dolson, September 4, 1787, *SCP* 9:179; Timothy Pickering to Ben Franklin, September 5, 1787, *Ibid.*, 180; Timothy Pickering to Samuel Hodgdon, August 26, 1787, *Ibid.*, 169, 170-171.

<sup>50</sup> Proclamation for the Arrest of John Franklin and Others, September 25, 1787, *SCP* 9:204-205; Presentment of John Franklin and Others, November, 1787, *Ibid.*, 513-514.

<sup>51</sup> Deposition of John J. AcModer, December 22, 1788, *SCP* 9:523-525. For early evidence of AcModer's willingness to betray the Susquehannah Company see John Franklin to James Hamilton, April 29, 1787, *Ibid.*, 117.

The Lessees' involvement in agrarian unrest in northern Pennsylvania peaked in the fall of 1787. Zerah Beach, Benjamin Allen, and John McKinstry arrived at Tioga Point in September bearing several casks of gun powder and plans for an armed uprising. McKinstry and Beach took charge of Wild Yankees after the arrest of John Franklin and rallied settlers on both sides of the New York-Pennsylvania line. Under their command, these "Tioga & Newtown ruffians" abused Connecticut claimants who sided with Pennsylvania and, hoping to spread the revolt south, marched down the Susquehanna toward Wilkes-Barre.<sup>52</sup> Lines of allegiance between Yankee insurgents and the New York Genesee Company can also be seen in signatures attached to a circular that made its way through the New York-Pennsylvania border region in September and October. The document, known as "the Combination," contained a oath to resist Pennsylvania and support the Connecticut claim. Among the signatures attached to this pledge were those of Lessees John McKinstry and Benjamin Allen, Susquehannah Company agitator Zerah Beach, and numerous half-share settlers.<sup>53</sup>

Evidence gathered in the wake of Timothy Pickering's kidnapping revealed that the Lessees' ties to Wild Yankees remained strong into the summer of 1788. Pickering himself did not doubt that the Lessees and the "junto of the Susquehannah Company" commanded the half-share settlers who took him prisoner.<sup>54</sup> The Lessees' link to Yankee insurgency was not a closely guarded secret but common knowledge among settlers. Benjamin Earl testified that he and his fellow kidnappers received word that John McKinstry and his associates supported their actions and would provide them with lands in New York as a

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<sup>52</sup> Deposition of John Shepard, November 9, 1788, *SCP* 9:514-516; Ebenezer Bowman to Timothy Pickering, October 17, 1787, *Ibid.*, 242-243; Timothy Pickering to Samuel Hodgdon, October 19, 1787, *Ibid.*, 245; Murray, *History of Old Tioga*, 303.

<sup>53</sup> *SCP* 9:xxvii-xxviii; Agreement of Susquehannah Company Members, September, 1787, *Ibid.*, 215-217; Ebenezer Bowman to Timothy Pickering, October 17, 1787, *Ibid.*, 243.

<sup>54</sup> Timothy Pickering to Benjamin Franklin, July 19, 1788, *SCP* 9:416-417; Timothy Pickering to Peter Muhlenberg, August 9, 1788, *Ibid.*, 461.



reward. Even though the kidnappers' hopes for support from the Lessees proved ill-founded, their belief that aid would be forthcoming testifies to a wide-spread awareness of the speculators' involvement in the Connecticut claim.<sup>55</sup>

When the kidnapping plot collapsed, many of Pickering's abductors demonstrated their faith in the Lessees by fleeing to New York. Frederick Budd, the Abbots, John Whitcomb, David Woodward, John Hyde Jr., Gideon Dudley, and the Kilborn brothers all went north in search of sanctuary. John Jenkins, who halfheartedly orchestrated the kidnapping plot, followed suit.<sup>56</sup> The kidnappers' escape route mirrored a larger northward movement of Yankee resistance. Beginning in the mid 1780s, the heartland of Yankee opposition slowly shifted away from the Wyoming Valley. By 1788, Wild Yankee insurgents had moved up the Susquehanna and ensconced themselves along the Pennsylvania-New York border.

After the Second Pennamite-Yankee War, the center of opposition to state authority moved from Wilkes-Barre to Yankee settlements surrounding Tioga Point. By 1788 Yankee resistance centered on Athens, a settlement that lay just south of the New York state line at the confluence of the Tioga and Susquehanna rivers. The Susquehannah Company laid out Athens in the spring of 1786. From the start, the town acted as a magnet for radical Connecticut claimants.<sup>57</sup> John Jenkins, Elisha Mathewson, Ethan Allen, Joel Thomas, Zerah Beach, William Slocum, Waterman Baldwin, Elisha Satterlee, and John Swift all held proprietors rights in the new settlement. John Franklin, another Athens proprietor, moved there after his release from prison in September 1789. Christopher Hurlbut, William Miller, Daniel Moore, Mason Cary, and Eldad Kellogg became Athens'

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<sup>55</sup> Deposition of Benjamin Earl, July 19, 1788, *SCP* 9:420; Deposition of William Carney, July 29, 1788, *Ibid.*, 432; Deposition of Garret Smith, August 7, 1788, *Ibid.*, 454.

<sup>56</sup> Timothy Pickering's Memorandum on His Abductors, August 7, 1788, *SCP* 9:436-438; Obadiah Gore to Timothy Pickering, July 30, 1788, *Ibid.*, 440-441.

<sup>57</sup> Murray, *History of Old Tioga*, 269; Certificate and Survey for the Town of Athens, May 22, 1786, SCA Liber C:98.

first settlers and served as a vanguard for other half-share men who took up land in the town.<sup>58</sup>

The establishment of Athens was only part of a larger expansion of Yankee settlement. The Susquehannah Company granted several new towns to its supporters between Tunkhannock Creek and the New York border. In the summer of 1786, company agents located the town of Whitehaven on Wyalusing Creek and reissued Claverack, which had been located at the confluence of Sugar Creek and the Susquehanna River. The company also granted the town of Ulster and located it along the Susquehannah River just south of Athens. Among Ulster's proprietors were Simon Spalding, William Judd, Joseph Kinney and other Yankee radicals.<sup>59</sup> The company did not limit its town-founding to the banks of the Susquehanna--the South Branch of the Tioga River became another site of activity.

The creation of new company towns along the Susquehanna and Tioga rivers provided homesteads for half-share settlers, spread Yankee insurgency, and furnished speculators with commercial opportunities. In November 1786, the Susquehannah Company established Hamilton, Goresburgh, Bentonsburgh, and Johnson along the South Branch of the Tioga River. Caleb Benton, Joseph Hamilton, Ethan Allen, and John McKinstry received the land rights to these towns, garnering over sixty thousand acres.<sup>60</sup> The proprietors of these towns labored to develop their new properties. For example, by the summer of 1787 Caleb Benton had attracted at least twenty families to his lands. Under the watchful eyes of the Lessees, Newtown, a frontier community along the Tioga River in

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<sup>58</sup> Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 270-274; Murray, *History of Old Tioga*, 252-253, 304; Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1647; Half-shares entered into Athens, May 8-June 1, 1786, SCA Liber I:60-66.

<sup>59</sup> Certificate and Survey for Claverack, August 31, 1786, SCA Liber C:100; Certificate and Survey for Whitehaven, May 17, 1786, *Ibid.*, 97; Certificate and Survey for Ulster, July 21, 1786, SCA Liber I:25.

<sup>60</sup> Certificates and Surveys for Hamilton, Goresburgh, Johnson, and Bentonsburgh, November 26, 1786, SCA Liber I:18-25; Harvey & Smith, *History of Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1537.

New York, became a staging-point for Yankee settlement along the state line and for speculative ventures in the Connecticut claim.<sup>61</sup>

Connecticut claimants mixed land speculation with insurgency and readily entered the land market in both Pennsylvania and New York. John Swift and John Jenkins became the proprietors of a 21,000-acre township in New York which later became the bustling frontier settlement of Palmyra. Likewise, Uriah Stevens, Joel Thomas, and several other Wild Yankees joined together to purchase and develop lands around Newtown, New York.<sup>62</sup> Connecticut claimants also became important players in the Lessees' land grab in New York. For instance, John Jenkins, who served as the Yorkers' chief surveyor, surreptitiously gerrymandered the boundary line between the Lessees' lands and those of another company of speculators so that the village of Kanadesaga, a strategically significant backcountry settlement, would be contained within the Genesee Company's claim. Peter Bortle and Joseph Kilborn, two more Yankees who took an active role in promoting the Lessees' claims, had moved to Kanadesaga by 1793.<sup>63</sup>

Central New York, in addition to serving as a field for speculating ventures, became a destination for many Wild Yankees escaping prosecution in Pennsylvania. After the kidnapping of Timothy Pickering, many half-share men abandoned their holdings in Pennsylvania and took up lands in New York. By 1790 Martin and Gideon Dudley could be found among the inhabitants of Canandaigua, New York. Likewise, Solomon Earl found employment with John Jenkins and John Swift as a surveying assistant.<sup>64</sup> William Hall moved to the town of Union. Aaron Kilborn ended up working as a carpenter in

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<sup>61</sup> Obediah Gore & Mathias Hollenback to Timothy Pickering, July 3, 1787, *SCP* 9:149-150; Timothy Pickering to Samuel Hodgdon, August 9, 1787, *Ibid.*, 154; Zerah Beach to John Franklin, September 14, 1787, *Ibid.*, 192-193.

<sup>62</sup> Murray, *History of Old Tioga*, 305, 306 n. 5; "Sketch of the Life of Lt. Col. John Jenkins," *Proceedings and Collections of the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society* 18 (1922): 249-251.

<sup>63</sup> Turner, *Pioneer Settlement*, 162, 245-246, 230-232.

<sup>64</sup> Turner, *Pioneer Settlement*, 166, 169, 272, 378.

upstate New York; his brother, Timothy, followed suit and became a resident in the town of Seneca. Half-share men Enos Tubbs, David Woodward, Jephthah Earl, and Daniel Earl also took up lands along the New York frontier.<sup>65</sup>

Wild Yankees who emigrated to the New York frontier demonstrate that settlers not only traversed geographical space in their struggle for land and autonomy but crossed lines of class and social status. In the same way that prominent speculators could promote agrarian unrest in their pursuit of profit and power, frontier yeomen engaged in commercial ventures and embraced speculation as a way to secure property and independence.<sup>66</sup> This observation provides a key to understanding the evolution of Yankee resistance: settlers and speculators could unite to fight Pennsylvania because they possessed a common ground and common interests.

Martin Dudley's experiences as a settler along the New York frontier illustrate the permeability of the lines that separated yeomen from gentlemen and agrarian insurgents from frontier entrepreneurs. Martin Dudley, a Yankee farmer who also plied his trade as a carpenter, removed to Kanadesaga after his run-in with Pennsylvania authorities in 1788. Dudley, one of the many poor farmers who became agrarian insurgents in Pennsylvania, took on a very different persona in New York. At first, he continued to work as a carpenter; however, he seems to have made a change in his status by 1789. In that year

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<sup>65</sup> Conveyance of half-share right no. 59 from William Hall to Caleb Benton, April 16, 1792, SCA Liber I:162; Conveyance from Enos Tubbs to Peter Bortle, March 7, 1794, SCA Liber C:315; Conveyance from Aaron Kilborn to Martin Dudley, December 29, 1794, Ibid., 304; Conveyance from Gideon Dudley and others to Martin Dudley, December 29, 1794, Ibid., 311; Conveyances from David Woodward and others to Peter Bortle, March, 1794, Ibid., 315-316; Conveyance from Timothy Kilborn to Joel Whitcomb, SCA Liber I:89.

<sup>66</sup> Stephon Aaron, "Pioneer and Profiteers: Land Speculation and the Homestead Ethic in Frontier Kentucky," *Western Historical Quarterly* 23 (May 1992): 182; Paul W. Gates, "The Role of the Land Speculator in Western Development" *Pennsylvania Magazine of History & Biography* 66 (July 1942): 315-316; James A. Henretta, "Families and Farms: *Mentalité* in Pre-Industrial America" *WMQ* 35 (January 1978): 27.

Dudley agreed to build a barn on William Walker's houselot in Canandaigua, New York. A contract drawn up to finalize the deal referred to Martin Dudley as a "Gentleman." If Dudley fit this title, then he did not build Walker's barn with his own hands but probably supervised workmen under his employ. This document furnishes the first glimpse of Dudley's improving fortunes in New York and, perhaps, of his willingness to engage in self-fashioning.<sup>67</sup>

Martin Dudley transformed himself from a yeoman farmer and backcountry agitator to a trader and rough-hewn gentleman of the New York frontier. Like many frontier inhabitants, Dudley combined agrarian unrest with commercial gain. Once in New York, he set himself up as a middleman between Connecticut claimants who had left Pennsylvania for the Finger Lakes region and speculators who maintained their interest in the Susquehannah Company. In December 1794, Martin Dudley, who had now gained the title of "Merchant," purchased company shares from his son Gideon Dudley and other half-share men. Weeks later, Dudley transferred these rights to Elisha Satterlee and John Hutchinson "in consideration of a valuable sum." In a separate deal, Dudley sold a six-hundred-acre tract along the Lackawanna River to Satterlee and Hutchinson for a hundred pounds.<sup>68</sup> Martin Dudley was not the only Wild Yankee to turn agrarian insurgency into an instrument of commercial gain. Peter Bortle, a petty speculator from the Hudson Valley whose ties with the York Lessees had led him into northeast Pennsylvania in 1786, returned to New York and took up residence in Ontario County. After settling into his new home, Bortle began buying up the Susquehannah Company rights of other Yankee migrants and selling them for a profit to speculators who wished to

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<sup>67</sup> Agreement between Martin Dudley and William Walker, August 25, 1789, William Walker Papers, New York Historical Society.

<sup>68</sup> Conveyances between Martin Dudley and Gideon Dudley, December 29, 1794, SCA Liber C:311; Conveyance from Aaron Kilborn to Martin Dudley, December 29, 1794, *Ibid.*, 304; Conveyances from Martin Dudley to Elisha Satterlee & John Hutchinson, January 7, 1795, *Ibid.*, 301-303.

invest in the Connecticut claim. In March 1794, Bortle purchased a number of half-share rights and handed them over to Guy Maxwell, a merchant from Athens, who agreed to sell them for a profit. Maxwell lived up to his promise and completed Bortle's speculative venture when he sold the half-share rights to another Athens resident, David Paine.<sup>69</sup>

Wild Yankees mixed agrarian aspirations with a desire for profit and commercial opportunity. Martin Dudley, who had advised the half-share men who held Timothy Pickering prisoner, continued to operate as a leading figure among Yankee settlers once he moved to New York. However, instead of acting as rebel elder, Dudley became a frontier merchant who served as an intermediary between Yeomen and wealthy, non-resident speculators. Dudley's life highlights the flexibility of backcountry identities and the adaptability of settlers' social networks.

Chapter three examined the roots of Wild Yankee resistance by exploring how familiar face-to-face relationships framed settler insurgency and undergirded the kidnapping of Timothy Pickering. This chapter tells the other half of the story. It looks at the "Great men" who backed the plot to abduct Pickering and investigates why they resurrected the Susquehannah Company and entered the Wyoming dispute. More important, this chapter explores the translocal dimension of Yankee insurgency and shows that the contest for the northeast frontier, though powerfully shaped by local conditions, was not isolated from outside events.

This exploration of the translocal dimensions of Yankee insurgency also demonstrates that the relationship between speculators and settlers, rich and poor, eastern elites and frontier inhabitants was complex. Ethan Allen, who helped to join the Wyoming

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<sup>69</sup> Conveyances from Enos Tubbs, David Woodward, and Jephtha Earl to Peter Bortle, March, 1794, SCA Liber C:315; Agreement between Peter Bortle and Guy Maxwell, December 14, 1794, *Ibid.*, 316; Conveyance from Guy Maxwell to David Paine, December 20, 1794, *Ibid.*, 317-318.

controversy to a wider struggle for property and power along America's revolutionary frontier, epitomizes how backcountry inhabitants often crossed social boundaries and state lines. Allen began his career as a frontier insurgent and opportunistic land developer in the Hampshire Grants. He came to the region not as the well-traveled frontier statesman who later journeyed to the Wyoming Valley, but as a Connecticut yeoman seeking land and independence. Ethan Allen saw in the frontier's conflicting land titles and contested authorities a means of gaining wealth and status.

Ultimately, cooperation between settlers and speculators, insiders and outsiders, rested upon the Susquehanna Company's ability to provide the former with freeholds and the latter with commercial opportunity. Both, in turn, rested upon the expansion of company settlements in Pennsylvania. Yankee radicals recognized this simple truth and laid out new company towns along New York-Pennsylvania border in order to satisfy the desires of speculators and settlers alike. This alliance of yeomen and land developers, which helped to maintain resistance in the latter 1780s, would also provided the blue-print by which Wild Yankees would expand their challenge to the state of Pennsylvania in the following decade.

## CHAPTER V PENNSYLVANIA'S YANKEE INVASION

*The eyes of the eastern states are upon your country--hundreds and hundreds of your Company friends are preparing to emigrate to you--men of property and ability are sending out their sons, and many calculating to remove with their families and effects into your country.--William Judd to Wyoming's Settlers, April 1787<sup>1</sup>*

In October 1792, frontier entrepreneur and land speculator Samuel Wallis went up Tunkhannock Creek to survey lands claimed by Samuel Meredith and other Philadelphia Merchants who had gained title to vast tracts of land along the northeast frontier. However, Wallis's survey was interrupted when Wild Yankees fired upon his workmen--one musket ball smacked into a tree, narrowly missing a surveyor and his axeman. Fearing for their lives, the Pennsylvanians returned to their camp. After dark, a group of armed Yankee settlers, their faces blacked with soot, rushed upon the surveyors. The insurgents held the Pennsylvanians at gun point and only left after Wallis promised that he would abandon the survey. In accordance with his pledge, Wallis and his men struck camp and marched away the next morning.<sup>2</sup>

This encounter demonstrates that Yankee resistance survived the debacle that followed the kidnapping of Timothy Pickering and continued into the last decade of the eighteenth century. As in the past, unrest along the frontier continued to be defined by local clashes

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<sup>1</sup> William Judd's Address to the Settlers at Wyoming, April 13, 1787, Robert J. Taylor, ed., *The Susquehannah Company Papers*, 11 vols. (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1970), 9:99 (hereafter cited as *SCP*).

<sup>2</sup> Linda Fossler, "Samuel Wallis: Colonial Merchant, Secret Agent," *Proceedings of the Northumberland County Historical Society* 30 (December 1990):107-115; Samuel Wallis to Samuel Meredith, October 11, 1792, *SCP* 10:161.



over property and power. However, confrontations between Pennsylvanians and Yankees were also affected by forces that reshaped the frontier as America entered the nineteenth century.

A lively market in frontier lands, combined with heavy migration into the backcountry, reconfigured agrarian insurgency in northeast Pennsylvania. During the 1790s, America's land market experienced an unprecedented boom as thousands of settlers flooded the backcountry in search of homesteads. Merchants, gentlemen, and entrepreneurs, sensing that there was money to be made from selling land to these immigrants and lacking other fields for investment, redoubled their efforts to purchase and develop frontier property. Migration and land speculation produced a dramatic surge in frontier expansion: between 1790 and 1820, Americans occupied and improved more frontier lands than in the previous two centuries of European colonization. In Pennsylvania, frontier expansion intersected with agrarian insurgency. The same conditions that promoted commercial speculation and migration also encouraged Connecticut claimants to aggressively reassert their soil rights.<sup>3</sup>

Wild Yankees fought Pennsylvania by harnessing their insurgency to the commercial and social energies bound up in frontier expansion. In the last decade of the eighteenth century, the Connecticut claim attracted speculators who wanted to take advantage of America's robust land market and, thus, gained advocates who had the means and the ambition to fill northern Pennsylvania with Yankee immigrants. These settlers, in turn,

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<sup>3</sup> Much has been written about America's post-Revolutionary land boom. Works pertinent to this study include Norman B. Wilkinson, *Land Policy and Speculation in Pennsylvania, 1779-1800: A Test of the New Democracy* (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1958); Idem., "The 'Philadelphia Fever' in Northern Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania History* 20 (January 1953): 41-56; and William Wyckoff, *The Developer's Frontier: The Making of the Western New York Landscape* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1988). For insights into the link between frontier speculation and agrarian unrest, see Alan Taylor, "Agrarian Independence: Northern Land Rioters After the Revolution," in Alfred F. Young, ed., *Beyond the American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Univ. Press, 1993), 232-233.

overwhelmed isolated Pennsylvania claimants and, marking a new turn in Yankee strategy, provided the electoral majority needed to take over local government. Instead of resisting the imposition of Pennsylvania's political institutions, Yankee insurgents would now use them to serve their own ends. Frontier expansion also proved to be a catalyst of backcountry localism. Settlers often outpaced the authority of government institutions and the early republic's metropolitan elite. Freed from such constraints and thrown upon their own resources, backcountry inhabitants created a distinctly localist social order that rested upon informal authorities and face-to-face contacts. When government officials and powerful gentlemen sought to reassert their control over the frontier, settlers resisted. This process, like land speculation, was linked to the revitalization of Yankee insurgency in the 1790s. Though land developers played an important role in resisting state rule, settlers' localism formed the foundation of expansion and insurgency along the frontier.

More than ever, Yankee resistance depended upon the combined efforts of settlers and speculators. Though Yankees came to blows with Pennsylvania's landholders, an equal number of opportunistic speculators from New England and New York put their energies behind the Connecticut claim. Settlers and Susquehannah Company speculators, though they possessed different aims and aspirations, found a common ground in their mutual opposition to Pennsylvania.<sup>4</sup> In the closing years of the eighteenth century, this coalition of frontier yeomen and eastern entrepreneurs intensified the challenge to Pennsylvania's authority and dramatically expanded the geographical scope of Yankee resistance.

### **"a matter of Great Speculation"**

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<sup>4</sup> Alan Taylor, "'To Man Their Rights': The Frontier Revolution," in Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Aklert, ed., *The Transforming Hand of Revolution: Reconsidering the American Revolution as a Social Movement* (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1995), 233-236, 244-246.

More than a decade after the Trenton Decree, Yankee settlers continued to resist Pennsylvania's authority and soil rights. In March 1797, Justice of the Peace Asahel Gregory reported to Pennsylvania Governor Thomas Mifflin on the deterioration of state rule along the northeast frontier. Gregory explained that Yankees had illegally sold large tracts of land and thus made the Connecticut claim "a matter of Great Speculation" among unprincipled men in New York and New England. In turn, these predatory land speculators promoted settler resistance in order to secure their investments.<sup>5</sup>

The resurgence of Yankee insurgency in the 1790s paralleled the decade's mania for land speculation. This was no mere coincidence: the Susquehannah Company worked to tie its struggle to the dynamism of frontier expansion. Indeed, by 1795, it had successfully bridged the gap between speculation and agrarian insurgency. The company's earlier efforts to foment settler unrest in the Wyoming region paved the way for this significant development. Equally important was the timing of the company's move; it came just when Pennsylvania's inability to quiet Yankee claimants had served to reignite agrarian disturbances.

Pennsylvania unwittingly took a hand in reviving Yankee resistance when it repealed the Confirming Act in 1790. The act, which had promised to confirm Connecticut deeds that predated the Trenton Decree, never went into operation but instead remained in a sort of legislative limbo. Ultimately, the law was repealed after the state assembly gave into pressure from Pennsylvania claimants who hoped to regain their lands in the Wyoming Valley.<sup>6</sup> Pennamites, who had been banned from prosecuting Connecticut claimants protected by the Confirming Act, brought a flurry of ejectment suits against Yankee settlers. Even Timothy Pickering, who had purchased land under Connecticut deeds from

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<sup>5</sup> Asahel Gregory to Thomas Mifflin, March 14, 1797, *SCP* 10:431-432.

<sup>6</sup> *SCP* 10:xiv-xiv-xx; Repeal of the Confirming Act, April 1, 1790, *Ibid.*, 112-113.

his neighbors in Wilkes-Barre, became a target of prosecution.<sup>7</sup> This legal battle came to a head in 1795 when Robert Fenn, a Pennsylvania claimant, brought ejectment suits against John Dorrance, William Slocum, Samuel Allen, and Pickering. The suit between Fenn and Dorrance, which became a test case for all other ejectment proceedings, was decided in a federal court in favor of Robert Fenn.<sup>8</sup> Pennsylvania's victory proved to be extremely limited. Yankee settlers largely ignored the legal ramifications of the court's decision and continued to hold their land through force. Moreover, Connecticut claimants, once divided by the provisions of the Confirming Act, now joined together to defend their property.

With this legislative turnaround, Pennsylvania accomplished what John Franklin and his associates had failed to do: to bring together half-share men and old settlers. Soon after the repeal of the Confirming Act, Connecticut claimants entered into an agreement in which they promised to stand together against ejectment suits and to establish a common fund to help defray legal expenses. Yankee hard-liners James Finn, Justus Gaylord, and Chester Bingham joined with Zebulon Marcy, Abraham Westbrook, Obadiah Gore, and other moderates in signing the compact. Later, Yankee settlers formed a committee that included representatives from moderate settlements in the Wyoming Valley as well as radical enclaves farther up the Susquehanna River. This body organized a response to ejectment suits and administered the settlers' legal defense fund. Nothing better illustrates the renewal of unity among Connecticut claimants than the fact that John Franklin and Timothy Pickering buried their past differences and worked together on the settlers' committee.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Timothy Pickering to William Lewis, February 3, 1791, *SCP* 10:138; Timothy Pickering to Jesse Root, April 25, 1792, *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>8</sup> *SCP* 10:xxi-xxxii; Evidence Presented in *VanHorne's Lessee v. Dorrance*, *Ibid.* 232-307; William Paterson's Charge to the Jury in *VanHorne's Lessee v. Dorrance*, April, 1795, *Ibid.*, 308-327.

<sup>9</sup> Agreement by the Connecticut Claimants, 1790, *SCP* 10:130-131; Minutes of a Meeting of Representatives of the Connecticut Claimants, March 4, 1793, *Ibid.*, 165.

The repeal of the Confirming Act may have raised the hopes of Yankee radicals, but America's lively land market helped to convert those hopes into a plan of action. After the Revolution, land speculation, rather than commerce or manufacturing, became America's principle commercial venture. Cut off from Britain's trade networks, merchants cast their eyes toward America's vast, unexploited hinterlands.<sup>10</sup> Northern Pennsylvania, like the Ohio country, upstate New York, and Kentucky, became the focus of speculating schemes and land development projects. Pennsylvania's determination to exploit its land reserves, combined with instability in the United States' western territories, made the northeast frontier a popular destination among settlers and a choice investment among speculators. Indeed, before the United States defeated its Indian adversaries at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1795, many settlers were unwilling to journey into the Trans-Appalachian West while land could be found in more sheltered backcountry regions like northeast Pennsylvania.<sup>11</sup>

In Pennsylvania, frontier lands could be purchased from the state in large quantities and at low prices. However, it was not always easy to sell it at a profit. Several factors made land speculation a risky venture. First of all, the supply of land often outran demand. More commonly, developers overestimated the value of their property, charged exorbitant prices. Both served to dampen the land market. Yet the greatest problem facing speculators was not land but settlers. Backcountry immigrants were not cogs in speculators' land developing schemes but hard bargainers who attempted to pay as little as they had to for land. Moreover, settlers could easily turn into squatters and ignore speculators' demands for payment altogether. The result of all these pitfalls to frontier development was lower land prices: speculators and state governments discovered that the

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<sup>10</sup> Wilkinson, *Land Policy and Speculation in Pennsylvania*, 64; Thomas M. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1987), 314-316.

<sup>11</sup> Norman B. Wilkinson, "The 'Philadelphia Fever'," 41-44; Wilkinson, *Land Policy and Speculation*, 26-27.

best way to attract paying settlers was to sell their lands at cheap rates. In 1784 Pennsylvania sold its northern lands for about eighty cents an acre. Five years later, the state lowered its price to fifty-three cents. Finally, in the spring of 1792, Pennsylvania authorized undeveloped frontier land to be sold at the rock-bottom rate of twenty cents an acre. For back lands in the rough hill country east of the Susquehannah, prices went even lower: in northern Luzerne County, land could be had for about seven cents an acre while along the upper reaches of the Delaware River prices dropped to \$6.66 per hundred acres. Low prices, combined with the federal government's decision to fix its price for land in the Northwest Territory at two dollars an acre, finally sparked a land boom along the Pennsylvania frontier. Land sales soared: between 1792 and 1794, Pennsylvania's land office received applications for nearly ten-million acres spread throughout the northern and western portions of the state.<sup>12</sup>

The opportunities for profit offered by land speculation in northeast Pennsylvania quickly drew the attention of prominent men throughout America and Europe. Samuel Wallis obtained possession to over forty thousand acres in Luzerne and Northampton counties. He developed some of this land himself and sold off the balance to Timothy Pickering, Tench Coxe, Samuel Hodgdon, and other gentlemen. Henry Drinker and John Nicholson also accrued extensive claims along the northeast frontier. Drinker acquired over 50,000 acres in a region between the Delaware and Susquehanna Rivers known as the Beech Lands; Nicholson gained title to 12,000 acres along Tunkhannock Creek as well as large tracts of land elsewhere in northeast Pennsylvania. William Bingham, who also acquired large amounts of land in Maine and New York, ultimately laid claim to about a million acres across northern Pennsylvania.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Wilkinson, *Land Policy and Speculation*, 38, 48, 129-131, 209-210; David Craft, *History of Bradford County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co, 1878), 41; Phineas G. Goodrich, *History of Wayne County* (Honesdale, PA.: Haines & Beardsley, 1880), 100.

<sup>13</sup> Wilkinson, *Land Policy and Speculation*, 75; Stewart Pearce, *Annals of Luzerne*

Clearly, the Susquehannah Company had to take action if it hoped to keep its Indian purchase out of the clutches of wealthy land magnates. The rise of land speculation along the American frontier brought Connecticut claimants into conflict with powerful Pennsylvania land developers. However, speculation and frontier expansion also furnished the Susquehannah Company and its settlers with the means to win this struggle.

Wild Yankees protected their claims from Pennsylvania and its powerful landlords by converting land speculation and frontier settlement into instruments of insurgency. This relationship between frontier expansion and resistance evolved piecemeal in the decade after the Second Pennamite-Yankee War. In 1786 Susquehannah Company officials began to authorize new towns north of the Wyoming Valley in order to provide lands for half-share settlers and, more important, to avoid conflict between these newcomers and old settlers.<sup>14</sup> However, from the beginning, the establishment of new towns not only furnished settlers with land but provided commercial opportunities for aspiring frontier speculators such as Caleb Benton and Joseph Hamilton. When the Susquehannah Company established new towns along the Tioga River, it granted them to Benton, Hamilton, and other speculators who promised to fill them with settlers.<sup>15</sup>

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*County* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1866), 192-193; John Lincklaen, *Travels in the Years 1791 and 1792 in Pennsylvania, New York, and Vermont: Journals of John Lincklaen Agent of the Holland Land Company* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1897), 41-45; Margaret L. Brown, "William Bingham, Eighteenth-Century Magnate," *PMHB* 61 (October 1937): 412-413; Doerflinger, *Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, 319-322.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Hamilton to John Franklin, March 24, 1786, *SCP* 8:311; Grants for the Towns of Whitehaven, Athens, & Claverack, May 17, May, 22, & August 31, 1786, Susquehannah Company Account Books, Liber C:97, 98, 100, Connecticut Historical Society (hereafter cited as SCA; Samuel Gordon to Obadiah Gore, October 15, 1787, *SCP* 9:240.

<sup>15</sup> Caleb Benton to John Franklin, August 9, 1787, *SCP* 9:157-158. For details on Caleb Benton's, Joseph Hamilton's, and other speculators' involvement in the Connecticut claim see Grants of Townships in the Susquehannah Company Purchase, *SCP* 10:566-577.

John Franklin and his associates came to realize that by granting new towns and encouraging land speculation they could strike a blow against Pennsylvania. The profitability of any land speculation scheme depended upon attracting settlers who would develop the land and pay for deeds. In turn, settlers looked to frontier speculators for credit, legitimate titles, and the development of roads, mills, and other elements of infrastructure. Pennsylvania's Wild Yankees transformed this reciprocal relationship into a successful strategy of resistance. Newly arriving settlers provided the manpower needed to resist state authorities and intimidate Pennsylvania claimants. Equally important, backwoods farmers furnished land developers with the labor they needed to increase the value of their holdings and open up their lands to wealthier settlers.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, speculators contributed their wealth, aggressive spirit, and leadership to the Connecticut cause. The Susquehannah Company took the first premeditated steps toward linking speculation and settlement with insurgency when it laid out the town of Columbia along Sugar Creek late in 1793. The town, whose proprietors included Elisha Satterlee, Ira Stevens, Chester Bingham and other Yankee radicals, soon became home to a number of Yankee pioneers. The settlement of Columbia marked the beginning of a new wave of expansion in the Susquehannah Company purchase: in 1794 the company granted 16 new towns, in 1795 it laid out an astonishing 218.<sup>17</sup> This drastic increase in town grants marked the beginning of a new phase of the Wyoming dispute.

In 1795 Wild Yankees seized the initiative and changed the shape of agrarian resistance in Pennsylvania. Late in the previous year, John Franklin, Simon Spalding, John Jenkins,

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<sup>16</sup> Alan Taylor, *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 98; Charles E. Brooks, *Frontier Settlement and Market Revolution: The Holland Land Purchase* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1996), 23.

<sup>17</sup> *SCP* 10:xxxiii; The Susquehannah Company Commissioners Authorize a New Township, November 6, 1793, *Ibid.*, 191; The Susquehannah Company Authorize Two New Townships, January 20, 1794, *Ibid.*, 193; Grants of Townships in the Susquehannah Company Purchase, *SCP* 10:566-577.



and Peter Loop had called for a general meeting of the Susquehannah Company. In accordance with their notice, company shareholders gathered on February 18 at a tavern in Athens owned by James Irwin, an active Yankee land speculator. During this meeting, the company forged the policies through which it channeled the energies of frontier expansion into Yankee insurgency and renewed the speculator-settler alliance it had sponsored in the 1780s.<sup>18</sup> To encourage speculation in the Connecticut claim, the shareholders increased the amount of acreage contained in a company share from six-hundred to two-thousand acres. They also reduced the number of proprietors needed to establish a new town from twenty to eight. Thus, the process of town-founding became less cumbersome and more suited to the needs of land speculators. Finally, the meeting served to strengthen the grip Wild Yankees had on the company's leadership. John Franklin became company's clerk and treasurer while John Jenkins became its chief surveyor. Indeed, after the meeting, the headquarters of the Susquehannah Company was no longer located at Hartford but at Athens.<sup>19</sup>

News of the "Franklemmites" meeting soon reached the ears of Pennsylvania authorities and it did not take them long to discern that land offered under such lax regulations would attract troublemakers. To head off the arrival of more Yankee insurgents, the state passed the Intrusion Act. This piece of legislation made it a crime to sell, buy, and settle lands under Connecticut titles issued after the Trenton Decree. Those who illegally occupied lands in the state faced a two-hundred-dollar fine and a year-long prison term; individuals who conspired to survey and sell lands under the Connecticut claim were subject to a fine between five hundred and one thousand dollars and up to eighteen months in prison at hard labor. The punishment for resisting arrest was even more severe: the law stipulated

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<sup>18</sup> Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 41; Louise Welles Murray, *A History of Old Tioga Point and Early Athens* (Wilkes-Barre, PA: Reader Press, 1907), 334-336.

<sup>19</sup> Minutes of a Meeting of the Susquehannah Company, February 18, 1795, *SCP* 10:215-218.

fines between five hundred and five thousand dollars and three to seven years imprisonment at hard labor. Finally, the law provided for calling out the militia to combat intruders.<sup>20</sup>

Pennsylvania failed to deter settlers from taking up lands under the Connecticut claim, and the northeast frontier soon became the scene of fevered activity among adherents of the Susquehannah Company. Moreover, speculators rapidly acquired Susquehannah Company grants to hundreds of thousands of acres across northern Pennsylvania. Putnam Catlin, a Yankee moderate who maintained ties with Pennsylvania landholders, described the process by which Connecticut deeds had been "bought up by companies of wealthy men at the Eastward." One of these speculator associations came together in February 1795 when William Wynkoop, Elisha Satterlee, Labius Hammond, John Spalding, Durance Irwin, and Chester Bingham agreed to jointly purchase and develop Susquehannah Company towns. Another Yankee speculator, Clement Paine (a brother of David Paine, the Susquehannah Company's assistant clerk) wrote his brother, Seth, that "a great number of persons of respectability, property, and influence" from throughout New England and New York had taken up the Connecticut cause. Clement assured his brother that these investors had joined the Susquehannah Company "not thro' inadvertance, but from a full knowledge of all the leading circumstances" surrounding its contest with Pennsylvania.<sup>21</sup>

Susquehannah Company shares became commodities. Bargain prices and the Susquehannah Company's liberal policies combined to make Connecticut titles an attractive investment to merchants, land speculators, and other profit-minded men

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<sup>20</sup> Jesse Fell, March 5, 1795, *SCP* 10, 219-220; The Intrusion Act, April 11, 1795, *Ibid.*, 227-229.

<sup>21</sup> Putnam Catlin to John Nicholson, December 12, 1798, Asylum Company Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Articles of Agreement by William Wynkoop and Others, February 16, 1795, *SCP* 10: 212-213; Clement Paine to Seth Paine, September 20, 1796, *Ibid.*, 386.

throughout the northeast. In order to obtain a town grant, a proprietor, or proprietors, had to hold enough company rights to cover a sixteen-thousand-acre township. However, there were only so many company shares in circulation: in addition to rights issued before the Revolution, the only other shares offered by the company had been distributed under the full and half-share resolves of 1785. Thus, an ever-increasing number of land developers sought to obtain a limited number of shares--the result was an increase in the value of company rights as the demand for Connecticut rights outstripped the supply. Speculators purchased Susquehannah Company rights held by non-resident shareholders in New England and New York, and purchased rights, or portions of rights, from Yankee settlers in Pennsylvania. Elisha Janes, James Dole, and Wait Rathburn--merchants and innkeepers from Troy, New York--aggressively bought up Connecticut titles. They purchased whole share rights from Elisha Montgomery, Walter Hewitt, and Noah Sternes of Stillwater, New York for thirty pounds; obtained a quarter share from Ephraim Wheeler of Saratoga for sixteen shillings; and bought whole shares from Nicholas Bragg and Benjamin Green of Washington County, New York for six and ten pounds respectively. Janes, Dole, and Rathburn used these rights and others to obtain a town grant in March 1795.<sup>22</sup>

Shares were not the only medium of exchange among Yankee entrepreneurs: as speculation heated up, investors bought and sold whole townships. In 1795 Walter Hamilton (a brother of Joseph Hamilton) and Ephraim Whitaker each obtained town grants from the Susquehannah Company. The two men quickly sold their claims to David Paine who, in turn, sold their towns for six thousand dollars to Silas Pepoon and Silas Whitney of Stockbridge, Massachusetts. On another occasion, Caleb Benton sold his

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<sup>22</sup> Conveyances between Elisha Janes, James Dole, Wait Rathburn and others, March 26-April 3, 1795, SCA, Liber C:125-128; See "Janes" in Grants of Townships in the Susquehannah Company Purchase, *SCP* 10:572.

rights to the town of Cato for nine thousand dollars to William Wynkoop; Wynkoop later sold half of the town to Nathaniel Wood.<sup>23</sup>

Dozens of individuals speculated in the Connecticut claim but a small number of prominent men dominated the trade in Susquehannah Company shares. Caleb Benton, who had been active in exploiting the commercial potential of the Connecticut claim in the 1780s, increased his speculating efforts in the 1790s. Using the scores of company rights in his possession, Benton obtained grants to Bentonsburgh, Goresburgh, Hamilton, and eight other townships. In the end, he laid claim to over 175,000 acres in the Susquehannah Company purchase.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, Elihu C. Goodrich of Claverack, New York and Seth Turner of New Haven, Connecticut formed a partnership and dealt extensively in company lands. Goodrich and Turner became the proprietors of Nankin, Canton, Calcutta, and several other company towns after scouring Connecticut and New York in search of unseated company rights.<sup>25</sup>

Silas Pepoon was one of the many influential gentlemen who invested in the Connecticut claim; his activities as a Yankee speculator shed light on how the commercial aspects of frontier expansion coexisted with agrarian insurgency. Pepoon--an innkeeper, merchant, and member of Massachusetts' rural gentry--acquired lands under the Connecticut claim in 1795. Although his conservative political and social stance had made him a target of regulator mobs during Shays' Rebellion, Pepoon did not allow his distaste for Massachusetts' agrarian radicals to dissuade him from taking advantage of commercial

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<sup>23</sup> Conveyance from David Paine to Silas Pepoon and Silas Whitney, September 7, 1795, SCA, Liber C:134; Conveyance from Caleb Benton to William Wynkoop, October 20, 1798, Ibid., 156.

<sup>24</sup> For towns granted to Caleb Benton see SCA, Liber C:129, 131, 133, 137, 145, 147, 153, 155, 157, 159, 165, 166.

<sup>25</sup> Town Grants of Nankin, Canton, and Calcutta, March 2, 1795, SCA, Liber C:251-256; Conveyances from Charles Foot, John Wells, Aaron Dewey, David H. Jewitt, Eneas Munson, Bishop Dodd, and Margaret Cook, Ibid., 290-299; Elihu Chauncey Goodrich to John Jenkins, November 18, 1794, *SCP* 10:209.

opportunities that grew out of backcountry unrest in Pennsylvania.<sup>26</sup> He gained possession of more than sixty thousand acres under the Connecticut claim. As was the case across northeastern Pennsylvania, these grants conflicted with land patents issued by the state of Pennsylvania. For example, one of Pepoon's properties, the town of Franklin, overlapped a ten-thousand-acre tract claimed by Pennsylvania landholder James Strawbridge.<sup>27</sup>

Silas Pepoon knew that settlers were the key to any successful venture in land speculation and hoped to use this truth to gain advantage over competing Pennsylvania landholders. In a unique episode, Pepoon wrote his adversary, James Strawbridge, and suggested that they make a deal, noting that disputes between Connecticut and Pennsylvania claimants had produced a situation in which "neither party can avail himself with any where near the [lands] real worth." He asked Strawbridge to give him the Pennsylvania deeds to the lands contained in the town of Franklin and, in return for this favor, promised to find settlers to fill the town. Pepoon assured Strawbridge that these settlers would increase not only the value and accessibility of his property but also of Strawbridge's neighboring lands. He argued that even a small tract near an existing settlement would bring in more money than a large but isolated property.<sup>28</sup> Of course, Pepoon's offer did contain a subtle threat: if Strawbridge refused to cooperate, the same Yankee settlers who could increase the value of his lands might just as easily take them by force.

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<sup>26</sup> David P. Szatmary, *Shays' Rebellion: The Making of an Agrarian Insurrection* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), 109-110.

<sup>27</sup> Grant of Lancaster, March 10, 1795, SCA, Liber D:112; Grant of Braintree, February 27, 1795, Ibid., 110; Conveyance from David Paine to Silas Pepoon, September 7, 1795, SCA, Liber C:134; Grant of the town of Franklin, SCA, Liber E:190.

<sup>28</sup> James Strawbridge to William Maclay, December 30, 1796, SCP 10:390; Silas Pepoon to James Strawbridge, February 10, 1796, Ibid., 330-331.

Yankee proprietors recognized that settlers provided them with their only leverage against Pennsylvania speculators and offered generous terms to secure prospective inhabitants. For example, Ezekiel Hyde, a leading proprietor of the Delaware Company, sold his lands at one dollar an acre--Pennsylvania claimants demanded two to three times as much for land of similar quality. Likewise, Nathan Morgan, a resident proprietor of the Susquehannah Company, attracted David Watkins, Oliver Canfield, Joseph Batterson, and other Yankee migrants to his lands by deeding fifty acres free of charge to each settler who seated himself on his lands. Yankee speculators Gordon Fowler and Reed Brockway also offered their settlers a fifty-acre land bounty. In the long run, Fowler's and Brockway's strategy worked to their advantage as their rapidly growing settlement attracted immigrants who could pay for their freeholds. One newcomer, Timothy Alden, purchased eight hundred acres from Brockway and paid for it in hard cash.<sup>29</sup>

Settlers were the key to both land speculation and agrarian insurgency. During the 1790s, the Susquehannah Company was in a far better position to win a war of settlement than the state of Pennsylvania. The company and its proprietors offered land for less money and with fewer restrictions than Pennsylvania and its landholders. Moreover, New England's rapidly growing population, combined with its shrinking pool of arable land, produced a wave of Yankee migrants who turned to the backcountry to seek their fortune. Many of these westward-moving Yankees would end up settling the hardscrabble hills of Pennsylvania's northeast frontier.

### **Easternites & Emigrants**

William Cooper, a renowned land developer and founder of Cooperstown, New York, once explained why New Englanders would make ideal settlers for the rough, heavily

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<sup>29</sup> Tench Coxe to Thomas McKean, August 12, 1800, *SCP* 11:529; Town of Granby Granted to Nathan Morgan, March 1, 1795, *SCA*, Liber E:164; Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 302-303, 320-322.

forested lands of northeast Pennsylvania. Cooper argued that hill country that "would frighten a Pennsylvania farmer" would prove the "support of an Easternite." He explained that a Pennsylvanian facing the region's dense stands of timber would only perceive the hardship of transforming forest into farms, while a Yankee, seeing that the trees would supply him with potash and other valuable commodities as he cleared the land, would leap at the chance to settle there. Cooper's assertion turned out to be accurate: many of the settlers who came to northeast Pennsylvania hailed from New England or Yankee communities in eastern New York.<sup>30</sup>

By the turn of the century, Yankees greatly outnumbered Pennsylvanians along the northeast frontier. Between 1793 and the turn of the century, Luzerne County's taxable population rose from 1,409 to 2,395, most of which can be attributed to the arrival of Yankee immigrants.<sup>31</sup> For instance, New Englanders monopolized settlement along Wyalusing Creek. James Rockwell came to Wyalusing from East Windsor, Connecticut in 1790; Seth Rockwell, a kinsman and fellow East Windsor native, arrived a year later. Two sets of brothers--Darius and Elijah Coleman of Litchfield County, Connecticut and Dimon and Benajah Bostwick of New Milford, Connecticut--settled along the creek in 1792. During the following year, half-a-dozen Yankee families arrived. In contrast, not a single Pennsylvania claimant could be found along Wyalusing Creek during this period.<sup>32</sup>

Family ties, New England's regional culture, common places of origin, and an intense localism bound Yankee settlers to one another and enabled them to baffle the powerful Pennsylvania landowners. Most of the Yankee inhabitants along Wyalusing Creek hailed from a handful of Connecticut towns and almost all of them could claim some sort of

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<sup>30</sup> William Cooper to Henry Drinker, November 3, 1791, quoted from Taylor, *William Cooper's Town*, 94-95.

<sup>31</sup> Tench Coxe to Presley C. Lane, January 3, 1801, *SCP* 11:4-5; Peter C. Mancall, *Valley of Opportunity: Economic Culture Along the Upper Susquehanna, 1700-1800* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 162.

<sup>32</sup> Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 337-338.

kinship with another Wyalusing settler. In addition to the Rockwell and Coleman brothers, the settlement sported three other sets of pioneering brothers. By migrating as groups of townsmen and kinsmen, Yankees eased the pains of frontier settlement and presented competing Pennsylvania claimants with a united front of resistance.<sup>33</sup>

In the decades following the American Revolution, thousands of New Englanders traded familiar settings for a life on the frontier. Thomas Rice was one Yankee who risked everything for an unknown future in the backcountry. In September 1791, John Lincklaen, a land agent for a group of European speculators known as the Holland Company, visited Rice at his home in Clarendon, Vermont. Lincklaen had first met the Vermonter earlier that year in New York's Genesee Country where Rice intended to take up residence on a newly-purchased four-hundred-acre tract. After laying eyes on Rice's well-tilled farm in Vermont, Lincklaen expressed his astonishment at seeing "a man 50 years old who has spent the best part of his life in clearing his land & enhancing its value, leaving it all just as he begins to enjoy the fruits of his labor, in order to bury himself anew in the forest, & expose himself to all the difficulties of forming a new settlement!"<sup>34</sup>

Before the Revolution, most Yankee migrants traveled north to unsettled lands in the Hampshire Grants and Maine or moved into western New England and eastern New York. In the 1780s, the course of Yankee migration turned to central New York, northeastern Pennsylvania, and more distant lands. The stream of New Englanders heading west only increased as the eighteenth century came to a close. During one three-day period in February 1795, over twelve hundred sleighs carrying Yankee migrants and their possessions passed through Albany on their way to the frontier. Between 1790 and 1820, over 800,000 New Englanders left their homes in search of open land and opportunity.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 337-340.

<sup>34</sup> Lincklaen, *Travels in the Years 1791 and 1792*, 83-84.

<sup>35</sup> David Maldwyn Ellis, "Rise of the Empire State, 1790-1820," *New York History*, 56



Economic and social conditions in New England contributed to this folk movement. The debt litigation and social unrest that plagued rural New England in the 1780s forced many yeomen to try their luck in the backcountry. For instance, revolutionary war veteran William Hencher found himself caught up in the Massachusetts Regulation. Fearing that the government would take vengeance on him for his role in the rebellion, Hencher left his Brookfield home and made his way to Newtown, New York. He was soon joined by his family and they made another move to the nearby frontier settlement of Big Flat. Amos Stone, who later took part in a terror campaign against James Strawbridge, was another Shaysite driven to the frontier by the threat of government prosecution. He ended up taking up land along the South Branch of the Tioga River under a Connecticut deed. Soil exhaustion and population growth also contributed to the westward flow of New England yeomen.<sup>36</sup> Not all migrants were pushed by adversity; many were pulled to the frontier by hopes of cheap land and prosperity. A growing European market for American produce, a declining Indian threat, and land developers' willingness to offer land at low prices and on credit made frontier life an increasingly attractive prospect.

Westward migration brought increasing numbers of New Englanders into northern Pennsylvania. Tench Coxe, a speculator and leading political figure of the early republic, received word of this Yankee invasion through an associate, Samuel Law. Law, who lived in Connecticut, asserted that the flow of Yankee emigrants into "the Northern & Western parts of N. York, the upper parts of Penn<sup>a</sup>" and the Ohio Country had become "more

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(January 1975): 5-28; David Maldwyn Ellis, "The Yankee Invasion of New York, 1783-1850," *New York History* 32 (January 1951): 4-8; Taylor, *William Cooper's Town*, 89-91.

<sup>36</sup> Szatmary, *Shays' Rebellion*, 32-33, 107-108; Orsamus Turner, *History of the Pioneer Settlement of Phelps and Gorham's Purchase, and Morris' Reserve* (Rochester: William Alling, 1852), 410; Edwin A. Glover, *James Strawbridge, Esquire* (Elkland Journal Press, 1954), 4; Kenneth Lockridge, "Land, Population, and the Evolution of New England Society, 1630-1790," *Past & Present* 39 (April 1968): 62-80.

formidable than ever." More significant, he stressed that Connecticut and Massachusetts were "alive" with plans for settling in Pennsylvania under the Connecticut claim.<sup>37</sup>

The Yankee invasion of Pennsylvania formed part of a larger chain of migration that led from New England into the Genesee Country and the Northwest Territory. People from Massachusetts and Connecticut blazed the first part of this migration route before the Revolution when they pushed into western New England and New York's Hudson River Valley. Resolved Sessions had followed this well-trod path to reach Pennsylvania's Susquehanna Valley. Session's starting point remains unknown, but it is clear that he moved from Vermont to New York before coming to rest along Towandee Creek in 1794. David Woodward, one of half-share men who kidnapped Timothy Pickering, seems to have followed a similar path, having lived in western Massachusetts and Vermont before settling in Pennsylvania.<sup>38</sup> After the Revolution, New Englanders continued to move west and passed into central New York and across northern Pennsylvania. In 1795, Duc de la Rochefoucault-Liancourt, one of the many French noblemen who descended upon the American Republic after the French Revolution, gained firsthand experience of this movement when he found Athen's only inn "crowded with travellers from the Jerseys, Pennsylvania, and New York, who intended to settle on the lakes" of central New York. Roswell and Jehiel Franklin joined the force of New York-bound migrants described by Rochefoucault. Jehiel abandoned his half-share right in the Susquehannah Company and kept moving north till he eventually ended up in Canada. Roswell Franklin, a Yankee moderate who took a leading role in rounding up Timothy Pickering's kidnappers, became a squatter on the New York frontier and committed suicide after facing repeated setbacks in his attempt to secure a homestead.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Samuel A. Law to Tench Coxe, February 14, 1797, *SCP* 10:411.

<sup>38</sup> Deposition of Resolved Sessions, July 31, 1797, *SCP* 10:442-443; Journal Kept by Timothy Pickering during his Captivity, June 26-July 15, 1788, *SCP* 9:408-409.

<sup>39</sup> James W. Darlington, "Peopling the Post-Revolutionary New York Frontier," *New York History*, 74 (October 1993): 341-381; Duc de la Rochefoucault-Liancourt, *Travels*

Thousands of New Englanders made their way into northeast Pennsylvania. Some came to stay, others stopped only long enough to rest and gather resources for another push west. Following an established migration route, Jonathan Harris moved from New England to Goshen, New York before the Revolution. After independence, he used a Susquehannah Company right his father had purchased in the 1750s and came to rest in Athens. Not all newcomers were contented with their lands. Reverend John Smith came to Pennsylvania in 1792 to settle his right in the Susquehannah Company purchase. He obtained a tract of land several miles west of Athens; however, Smith soon tired of investing his labor in the scanty soils of northern Pennsylvania and moved to the more promising lands of Kentucky.<sup>40</sup> The ultimate destination of many New Englanders was the Genesee Valley. For example, Solomon Teasy, who possessed a five-hundred-acre farm under the Connecticut claim, had come to Pennsylvania from New York in 1790. Although he had managed to clear thirty acres of land, he wished to move to the Genesee Valley and readily informed a prospective buyer that he would willing sell his freehold for \$5,390. Charles Williamson, a land agent who worked to settle western New York's Pultney Purchase, facilitated migration to the Genesee Country by opening up a road to Pennsylvania's Susquehanna Valley. Attracted by rumors of the Genesee Valley's rich soil and eager to escape contention with the state of Pennsylvania, many Yankees left the Wyoming region and became pioneers in western New York.<sup>41</sup>

It is easy to see that New Englanders migrated to the frontier in unprecedented numbers after the Revolution. Equally apparent is the fact that economic opportunity in the west

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*Through the United States of North America, The Country of the Iroquois, & Upper Canada in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797*, 2 vols. (London: R. Phillips, 1799), 1:100; Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 455.

<sup>40</sup> Murray, *History of Old Tioga*, 311-312; H. C. Bradsby, *History of Bradford County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: S.B. Nelson & Co., 1891), 546-547.

<sup>41</sup> Rochefoucault-Liancourt, *Travels Through the United States*, 1:97-98. For examples of Connecticut claimants who ended up in the Genesee country, see Turner, *Pioneer History of Phelps' and Gorham's Purchase*, 223, 252-253, 552-553.

and insecurity in the east converted many Yankee yeomen into pioneers. However, it is far more difficult to understand the social aspirations that motivated individual frontier migrants. Insight into this facet of frontier expansion requires a close look at the aims and values of settlers.

The pursuit of agrarian independence and the maintenance of kin networks shaped frontier migration just as much as economic considerations. John Lincklaen's account of Thomas Rice's move to the Genesee Country sheds light on the social dimension of frontier expansion. Lincklaen may have doubted the wisdom of Rice's decision to go west but he recognized the reasons that lay behind it. He explained that it was common for Americans to spend years developing a farm and then sell it for a profit to purchase a larger plot along the frontier. In doing so, Lincklaen concluded, yeomen hoped to secure enough property "to maintain & establish around them a dozen children." Thus, frontier migration served to sustain two processes central to the survival of agrarian society: the creation of close-knit social networks and the passage of landed property from one generation to the next.<sup>42</sup>

Rather than breaking families apart, frontier expansion often served to keep them together. For eastern households facing declining crop yields and land shortages, remaining in place often meant splitting up to find work in neighboring communities or distant towns. More important, a shortage of arable land worked to undermine farmers' efforts to maintain cohesive kin networks as sons and daughters had to move farther and farther away from their parents in order to set up a homestead. In contrast, the frontier offered farmers an abundance of land upon which they could maintain a closeknit family life.<sup>43</sup> While traveling along the Chemung River in central New York, Duc

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<sup>42</sup> Lincklaen, *Travels in the Years 1791 and 1792*, 83-84; Siles, "A Vision of Wealth," 125.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers

Rochefoucault-Liancourt met several groups of emigrants on their way to the Genesee Country. He commented that the migrants' "friendly connections also are mostly confined to their own families, which move about with them." Here, the Duc touched upon a significant feature of frontier migration: settlers did not abandon familiar social networks or sever emotional ties when they entered the backcountry.<sup>44</sup>

The settlement of Sugar Creek illustrates how frontier expansion served to re-create the ties of kinship and mutuality that were crucial to agrarian society. Ezra Rutty and his son, Ezra Jr., came to the creek in 1785 and opened the way for Jonas Smith, Daniel Guthry, Isaac Foster, and other Yankee pioneers.<sup>45</sup> In 1790, Amos Bennett came to Sugar Creek and Joseph Baily arrived two years later. As was commonly the case among Yankee settlers, family ties and regional backgrounds shaped Joseph Baily's and Amos Bennett's decision to settle near one another. Both men hailed from Orange County, New York; more important, Joseph Baily was Amos Bennett's brother-in-law, having married Bennett's sister, Susan. Martin Stratton, a millwright and carpenter from Hartford, came to Sugar Creek in 1794 and further reinforced the creek's growing neighborhood network by marrying Ezra Rutty's daughter, Rebecca. Martin Stratton's brother, Surager, arrived with Timothy Cephas a year or two later. Ozias Bingham, brother of Susquehannah Company speculator Chester Bingham, and several other Yankee migrants added their numbers to the growing backwoods neighborhood in 1796.<sup>46</sup>

The fact that migrants often traveled in the company of family members, kin, friends, and neighbors suggests that settlers wished to re-create familiar social relationships along

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Univ. Press, 1978), 71-72; Wyckoff, *The Developer's Frontier*, 108.

<sup>44</sup> Rochefoucault-Liancourt, *Travels in the United States*, 107; Lucy Jayne Botscharow-Kamau, "Neighbors: Harmony and Conflict on the Indiana Frontier," *Journal of the Early Republic* 11 (Winter 1991): 521; Taylor, *William Cooper's Town*, 97.

<sup>45</sup> C.F. Heverly, *History of the Towandas, 1776-1886* (Towanda, PA: Reporter-Journal Printing Co., 1886), 57-62.

<sup>46</sup> Heverly, *History of the Towandas*, 66-77.

the frontier. Raw frontier settlements, instead of lacking meaningful social ties, often supported extensive neighborhood and kin networks. Indeed, kin and neighbors quickly became one and the same in the backcountry as pioneers were joined by their relations and settler families intermarried. A Yankee settlement along the west bank of the Susquehanna formed under Captain Jonathan Terry became such a kin enclave. Captain Terry, who came to the northeast frontier in 1787, was soon joined by an uncle, his father, and six of his siblings. Not surprisingly, the community became known as Terrytown. Another group of Connecticut claimants joined by ties of kinship settled just west of Lake Wallenpaupack. Here Silas Purdy and his sons Jacob, Amos, and Isaac started a new community. They were soon joined by six more Purdys.<sup>47</sup> The common origins of migrants was another important source of cohesion for frontier communities. Standing Stone, a settlement of Connecticut claimants just north of Terrytown, drew a large proportion of its early inhabitants from two towns in eastern New York. Benjamin Ackla, Richard Benjamin, and Amos Bennett settled in Standing Stone after making their way from Florida, New York in 1782. Anthony Vander Pool and Isaac Wheeler came to the town from Kinderhook, New York in 1790. They were joined by fellow Kinderhook resident and Isaac Wheeler's brother-in-law, Nicholas Johnson.<sup>48</sup>

Settlers' concern for kin and community did not mean that they ignored economic realities or neglected the commercial opportunities of frontier expansion. Settlers' social and economic aspirations worked in tandem. The desire to maintain familiar social

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<sup>47</sup> Ellen Eslinger, "Migration and Kinship on the Trans-Appalachian Frontier: Strode's Station, Kentucky," *Filson Club Historical Quarterly* 62 (January 1988): 52-66; Botscharow-Kamau, "Neighbors," 521; Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 267-268; Goodrich, *History of Wayne County*, 166-167.

<sup>48</sup> Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 383. A similar process of kinship migration is described in David J. Goodall, "New Light on the Border: New England Squatter Settlements in New York During the American Revolution" (Ph.D. diss., State Univ. of New York at Albany, 1984), 104-106.

relationships channeled the course of migration, yet access to markets and natural resources also shaped where migrants chose to settle.<sup>49</sup>

Rather than representing an escape route from market relationships, westward migration placed yeomen at the center of the early republic's greatest commercial enterprise: the development and exploitation of the American frontier. Some pioneers transformed the very process of settlement into a speculative venture by sinking their labor into the land and selling their improvements to those who followed them. Settlers' involvement in commercial relationships did not emerge slowly over time but started as soon as they began to clear the land. Cutting down trees provided pioneers with lumber, potash, and pearl ash--valuable commodities that settlers marketed in order to defray the costs of farm-building. Another ready market avidly exploited by backcountry farmers was selling provisions to frontier-bound migrants who passed through their communities. Frontiersmen, rather than avoiding outside contacts, sought to settle themselves astride major routes of communication.<sup>50</sup>

At the grass-roots level, frontier expansion rested on a set of intertwined social and economic aspirations. Yeomen went to the frontier to maintain relationships and hierarchies rooted in household, kin, and neighborhood networks as well as to provide themselves with a level of material security and commercial opportunity absent in older eastern communities. This combination of agrarian and commercial aspirations can be seen in the settlement of the town of Claverack. Late in the 1780s, three brothers from Connecticut--James, Silas, and Orr Scovell--occupied lands in Claverack under Connecticut deeds. Like many Yankee settlers, the Scovells mixed farming with a modest amount of speculation. The brothers sold off part of their holdings to other settlers and

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<sup>49</sup> Brooks, *Frontier Settlement*, 2-4; Darlington, "Peopling the Post-Revolutionary Frontier," 346-347.

<sup>50</sup> Taylor, *William Cooper's Town*, 100-103; Ellis, "Rise of the Empire State," 13-14; Siles, "A Vision of Wealth," 123.

used to proceeds to finance the development of their remaining lands. Encouraged by such entrepreneurs, five settlers came to Claverack and took up land under Connecticut titles. By 1795, six more Yankees had joined the growing settlement.<sup>51</sup>

On a larger level, the settlement of the northeast Pennsylvania remained closely connected with the Susquehannah Company and the speculating ventures of its leading shareholders. For example, the Susquehannah Company paved the way for settlement of lands surrounding Sugar Creek when it established the towns of Juddsburgh, Columbia, Murraysfield, and Burlington along its upper reaches. William Judd, John Jenkins, John Franklin, and other leading Susquehannah Company proprietors obtained these town grants and quickly began to search for settlers.<sup>52</sup> In the spring of 1790, Isaac Dewitt, Abraham DeWitt, and Jason McKean came from New York to explore the creek. With the support of neighboring Connecticut claimants, the expedition cut a road down to the Susquehanna River. The following year, five families--including those of the original three pioneers--formed a settlement along the creek. In 1792 several other Connecticut claimants joined these settlers. Ezra Goddard, his two sons, and their slave came from Connecticut in 1796. Stephen Ballard and his cousins John and Nathaniel Ballard, all of Framingham, Massachusetts, soon followed. By 1800 dozens more Yankee settlers had arrived.<sup>53</sup>

The arrival of large numbers of New Englanders along the frontier--and the role the Susquehannah Company played in bringing them there--caused a considerable amount of apprehension among Pennsylvania claimants. Samuel Preston, a Pennsylvania Quaker and

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<sup>51</sup> Heverly, *History of the Towandas*, 39-52; Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 294-296. For the Scovells land dealings, see the Deposition of Casper Singer, January 26, 1797, SCP 10:399-400.

<sup>52</sup> Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 292-293; Columbia and Murraysfield Grants, March 15, 1795 (originally granted in December 1793), SCA, Liber H:146-147, 148; Burlington Grant, June 5, 1794, SCA, Liber I:72-73.

<sup>53</sup> Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 287-288;



land agent of Henry Drinker, witnessed the growth of Yankee settlements along the northern reaches of the Delaware River Valley. Writing from his home in Harmony, Pennsylvania, Preston informed Drinker that his lands were being occupied by settlers but warned that "too many of the emigrants are from the eastward, and more disposed to purloining of timber than of cultivating of farms." He claimed that New Englanders were "universally given to thieving" and "abundantly more impudent and debauched than any other clan." Preston's correspondence with Henry Drinker charted a rising tide of Yankee migration and revealed his own conversion into a passionate Yankee-hater. Preston found Yankee immigrants so troublesome that he wished they would stop coming; in this respect, as in all others, the New Englanders disappointed him.<sup>54</sup>

As the number of Yankee settlers increased, so did the level of tension in the backcountry. State landholders, instead of realizing profit from their investments, found themselves playing host to cantankerous Yankees who held very little respect for their property rights. During the last decade of the eighteenth century, Wild Yankees found themselves in a position to take the offensive against Pennsylvania: frontier migration had strengthened their hand, giving them the numbers needed to dominate local government and crowd Pennsylvania settlers off the land.

### **"Yankee-play"**

In the spring of 1791, Pennsylvania landholder Arthur Erwin wrote to Governor Mifflin begging protection from Wild Yankees. Erwin explained that he had purchased five thousand acres along the Tioga River from the state of Pennsylvania in 1785 and since that time had "patented, settled, cleared, and improved" his property. A lone Pennsylvania

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<sup>54</sup> Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, May 1, 1791, Henry Drinker Papers, Journal and Land Records, 1789-1809, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, November 19, 1792, *Ibid.*; Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, June 26, 1793, *Ibid.*

claimant in a sea of Yankee settlers, he found himself a target of "Insult and abuse" by neighbors who disputed his soil rights. On one occasion, Wild Yankees attacked Erwin and broke one of his arms with the handle of a pitch-fork. He took his assailants to court and, though "every necessary proof" was made of their guilt, they went unpunished. Erwin's adversaries consolidated their victory in court by stealing his crops and abusing his farm hands.<sup>55</sup>

Erwin's ordeal reflected the reemergence of widespread Yankee insurgency along the northeast frontier. Wild Yankees stepped up the level of violence against Pennsylvania settlers and took over county courts and local government. In the end, Arthur Erwin, like many other Pennsylvanians, lost his battle against this renewed insurgency. Outnumbered and without the support of the state, Erwin became another victim of agrarian violence. One evening, while on a visit to his tenant Daniel McDuffee, Erwin was shot and killed by an unknown gunman. Joel Thomas, a resident of Athens, was brought to trial for the murder but escaped punishment after being acquitted by a Luzerne County jury.<sup>56</sup>

Wild Yankees were able to take the offensive because they linked their insurgency to the demographic forces of frontier expansion. Simply put, the migration of Connecticut claimants into Pennsylvania made it possible for Wild Yankees to muster far more insurgents than Pennsylvania and its landholders could contend with. William Judd had this process in mind when he happily observed that New Englanders were "flocking" to the northeast frontier "and daily strengthening the Claim." Judge Jacob Rush, the president of Pennsylvania's Fifth Court of Common Pleas District, echoed Judd's words when he warned Governor Mifflin of the difficulties the state would bring upon itself if it allowed

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<sup>55</sup> Arthur Erwin to Thomas Mifflin, April 5, 1791, *SCP* 10:143-145; Murray, *History of Old Tioga*, 313-314.

<sup>56</sup> Proclamation of Governor Mifflin, June 20, 1791, Gertrude MacKinney, ed., *Pennsylvania Archives*, 9th ser., 10 vols. (Harrisburg: Dept. of Property & Supplies, 1931), 1:135-36; Murray, *History of Old Athens*, 315-18.



large numbers of Yankee settlers to gain a foothold. He concluded that every "Encrease of Inhabitants" under the Connecticut claim equalled "an Accession to *their* Strength."<sup>57</sup>

Like Arthur Erwin, Casper Singer gained first-hand knowledge of the rising tide of Wild Yankee aggression. Singer, a Pennsylvania claimant who resided near the mouth of Towandee Creek, obtained 120 acres of land from the state in 1785 and seated himself upon it in 1791. His troubles began in the fall of 1795 when Orr Scovell challenged his claim and proceeded, along with half-a-dozen Yankee settlers, to survey Singer's "improved fenced fields" and divide them into lots. When Singer demanded by what authority Scovell and his accomplices usurped his lands, they replied that Connecticut deeds in their possession justified their "Yankee-play."<sup>58</sup> This confrontation was not a singular event but formed part of a much larger pattern of insurgent surveys and settlement.

In the last decade of the eighteenth century, parties of Yankee surveyors spread across northeastern Pennsylvania to lay out new towns and fresh lines of resistance. State officials began to receive reports describing this campaign late in 1794. Soon after, Governor Thomas Mifflin issued a proclamation against the "ill-disposed persons" who "unlawfully intruded upon and surveyed" lands in Pennsylvania under the Connecticut claim. The state quickly followed up this warning with the passage of the Intrusion Act.<sup>59</sup> However, warnings and legislative initiatives did little to dampen the tide of illegal surveys. State officials were able to discover the names of several of the surveyors but failed to

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<sup>57</sup> William Judd to Timothy Pickering, March 24, 1794, *SCP* 10:195; Jacob Rush to Thomas Mifflin, July 1, 1797, *Ibid.*, 440.

<sup>58</sup> Heverly, *History of the Towandas*, 49-50; Deposition of Casper Singer, November 11, 1796, *SCP* 10:388-390.

<sup>59</sup> Deposition of Alexander Brown, December 16, 1794, *SCP* 10:210; Proclamation by Thomas Mifflin, January 26, 1795, *Ibid.*, 211; The Intrusion Act, April 11, 1795, *Ibid.*, 227-229.

apprehend them. A Pennsylvania surveyor, John Adlum, testified that settlers treated government authority with "ridicule and contempt" and refused to inform on Yankee surveyors. Likewise, Judge Jacob Rush complained that the illegal survey and sale of lands in northern Pennsylvania had been shrouded in "the thickest Viel of Darkness" by backcountry inhabitants who either supported the intruders or feared to speak out against them. Court records support the judge's statement: by the summer of 1797 not a single insurgent had been successfully prosecuted under the Intrusion Act.<sup>60</sup>

With Pennsylvania unable to arrest and prosecute Wild Yankees, the settlement of Connecticut claimants continued unchecked. Well-armed, well-equipped surveying parties traversed the whole of northeast Pennsylvania, spreading insurgency in their wake. In 1797 a state commission formed to investigate Yankee intrusions concluded that "the country west of the Susquehannah, nearly to the Allegheny River, along the northern boundary" had been mapped out under the Connecticut claim by as many as fifteen different groups of surveyors.<sup>61</sup> Pennsylvania speculators who laid claim to land in the backcountry found securing their possessions a difficult and laborious task. In December 1798, Putnam Catlin wrote to John Nicholson and told him that his properties' "soil and situation" would not "invite the Penn<sup>a</sup> farmers to settle." "On the other hand," he warned, "the quality, soil, and situation of this land is precisely such as to attract the New England farmer." Indeed, Catlin claimed that Yankees were so eager to settle in northern Pennsylvania "that Sanguinary laws can hardly check them from it." In contrast, he asserted that Pennsylvanians could "scarcely be hired at any rate to undertake the cultivation of such land."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> William Carter to Thomas Mifflin, June 28, 1796, *SCP* 10:352; Deposition of John Adlum, December 31, 1796, *Ibid.*, 392-393; Jacob Rush to Thomas Mifflin, July 1, 1796, *Ibid.*, 441.

<sup>61</sup> Report of the Committee on the Wyoming Controversy, January 16, 1797, *SCP* 10:396-397.

<sup>62</sup> Putnam Catlin to John Nicholson, December 12, 1798, Asylum Company Papers.

James Strawbridge experienced all the difficulties faced by Pennsylvania landholders who attempted to develop their lands in the face of Yankee resistance. In December 1796, Strawbridge wrote a letter to fellow Pennsylvania claimant William Maclay describing the troubles he had with Yankee settlers who seated themselves upon his property. In 1790 Strawbridge found five families squatting on his lands but decided to take no action against them after the settlers promised not to oppose his property rights. Two years later, the squatter population on Strawbridge's tract had grown to twenty families. Confident that their numbers would enable them to fend off any threat, the settlers "openly declared their rights from the Susquehannah Company" and defied both state authority and their landlord's soil rights. On one occasion, the Yankees even opened fire on Strawbridge and a group of surveyors under his employ.<sup>63</sup> Hoping the law would protect his property, Strawbridge brought ejectment suits against the intruders; however, instead of finding relief, his situation only worsened. Strawbridge did manage to win several ejectment suits, but for every Yankee he got rid of, two came to take his place. Ultimately, Wild Yankees forced Strawbridge to abandon his lands.<sup>64</sup>

The violent dispossession of Pennsylvania claimants by Wild Yankees became a common feature along the northeast frontier. For example, Connecticut claimants along Towandee Creek took possession of Casper Singer's fields, pulled down his home, and forced him out of the Susquehanna Valley. Likewise, in the summer of 1796, Pennsylvania claimants in Northampton County had become "seriously alarmed" when Wild Yankees threatened them with violence and ejectment. Samuel Preston believed that these settlers, many of whom were New Englanders, would have joined the Wild Yankees if they had not already made payments toward Pennsylvania titles. In Wayne County (a district struck off from

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<sup>63</sup> James Strawbridge to William Maclay, December 30, 1796, *SCP* 10:390. Glover, *James Strawbridge, Esquire*, 1-6. For a more in-depth discussion of the settlement of the South Branch of the Tioga River see John Franklin Meginness, *History of Tioga County Pennsylvania* (Chicago: R.C. Brown & Co., 1897), 56-58, 526-527.

<sup>64</sup> James Strawbridge to William Maclay, December 30, 1796, *SCP* 10:391-392.

the northern portion of Northampton County in 1798), Wild Yankees mobbed Judge Post, an immigrant from Long Island, and burned him in effigy because he supported the authority and soil rights of Pennsylvania.<sup>65</sup>

The same commitment to community that led to the creation closeknit frontier neighborhoods shaped these episodes of violence and dispossession. In a land torn by disputes over land and authority, supportive neighbors could quickly turn into menacing adversaries. For example, Resolved Sessions received rough treatment at the hands of his Yankee neighbors after he renounced the Connecticut claim and purchased land along Towandee Creek under a Pennsylvania deed. Casper Singer, who had sold the land to Sessions, wisely told him to hide the fact from Connecticut claimants. For as long as Session's secret remained hidden, he enjoyed good relations with his neighbors. But in the fall of 1796 his infidelity to the Connecticut claim became known. Soon after, Sessions' neighbors plundered his property and installed a newly arrived Yankee migrant, Aaron Gillet, in his home. To replace his losses, Sessions' leased some nearby land and a house from Casper Singer and restarted the process of farm-building. Sessions' troubles followed him to his new homestead. One day, while Sessions and his son Samuel were at work on their new farm, Jacob Bowman, Aaron Gillet, and a third Yankee strode up and warned them "not to plough another Inch," saying that the land belonged to Bowman.<sup>66</sup>

These tales of violence and dispossession provide only a partial picture of the difficulties faced by Pennsylvania claimants; settlers who accepted Pennsylvania titles also experienced a sustained campaign of legal harassment. While Yankee settlers carried out acts of physical violence against Pennsylvanians, their leading men commandeered local government and turned it against those inhabitants who remained loyal to the state.

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<sup>65</sup> Deposition of Casper Singer, January 26, 1797, *SCP* 10:399-401; Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, August 9, 1796, Henry Drinker Papers, Journal and Land Records, 1789-1809; Goodrich, *History of Wayne County*, 28.

<sup>66</sup> Deposition of Resolved Sessions, July 31, 1797, *SCP* 10:442-448.

In his voluminous correspondence with Henry Drinker, Samuel Preston described the tenuous nature of political authority in the backcountry. In the spring of 1794, Preston reported that over three hundred families in the upper reaches of Northampton County, finding themselves bereft of any local government, had resolved "to form an association or republic of their own." Preston blamed Pennsylvania's legislature for the failure of state institutions to keep pace with the spread of frontier settlements but recognized that New Englanders' "uncommon propensity to do something at politicks" had also encouraged thoughts of independence. He concluded that the settlers' actions were "very harmless, & perhaps necessary" and even considered aiding them in their attempt to bring law and order to the backcountry.<sup>67</sup> However, Preston discovered, to his horror, that settlers were not only willing to fill political vacuums with institutions of their own making, but ready to overthrow existing government in order to supplant it with their own authority.<sup>68</sup>

The migration of New Englanders to Pennsylvania furnished Yankee insurgents with the majority they needed to take control of local government institutions. Samuel Preston recognized this threat and prayed that no more New Englanders would come to Northampton County, noting that if they became a majority, "all goes to ruin." But the creation of a politically potent Yankee majority is just what the insurgents had in mind. During the last decade of the eighteenth century, Wild Yankees shifted their emphasis from toppling Pennsylvania's political apparatus to using it to serve their own ends.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, May 20, 1794, Henry Drinker Papers, Journal and Land Records, 1789-1809; Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, May 28, 1794, *Ibid.* For an overview of new state projects in northeast Pennsylvania and New York, see Julian P. Boyd, "Attempts to Form New States in New York and Pennsylvania, 1786-96," *New York State Historical Association Quarterly Journal*, 12 (July 1931): 257-270.

<sup>68</sup> Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, September 24, 1794, Henry Drinker Papers, Journal and Land Records, 1789-1809; Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, November 3, 1794, *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, May 22, 1799, Henry Drinker Papers, Journal and Land Records, 1789-1809.



Wild Yankees had used legal and political means to harass their opponents since the late 1780s. In one episode settlers chose five well-known Wild Yankees to serve as militia officers in Luzerne County's upper battalion. Here was one of the first occasions on which insurgents attempted to use state institutions, in this case the militia, to defy undermine state authority. The courts became another instrument of resistance. In 1789 William Miller, a Pennsylvania claimant, accused Elisha Mathewson, Elisha Satterlee, and others of forcible entry but lost his suit and his lands after a jury drawn from the region's Yankee inhabitants decided in the defendants' favor. The following year, a Yankee-dominated jury found two Pennsylvania settlers, Daniel McDuffee and John Doran, guilty of forcible entry and detainer after they had attempted to recover their land from a Connecticut claimant.<sup>70</sup>

The arrival of large numbers of New Englanders made it possible for Wild Yankees to strengthen their hold on Pennsylvania's political and judicial institutions. After 1795 even an outsider like Duc de la Rochefoucault-Liancourt could discern that Wild Yankees "acted on the principle, that an increase of the number of colonists would increase the force of resistance against the sentence of judicial dispossession." In a letter to Tench Coxe, Ephraim Kirby described the dismal prospects faced by Pennsylvania claimants who sought justice from Yankee-controlled courts. Kirby declared that "the shameful neglect of the magistrates in the County of Luzerne has been a subject of boast among the Connecticut claimants and a great encouragement to lawless adventure." Kirby believed, and rightly so, that the insurgents would "multiply in numbers and grow strong in confidence" as long as local courts failed to check their illegal actions. Luzerne County was not the only district in which Yankee settlers bent state institutions to their will. To the westward, Pennsylvania officials in Lycoming County had to contend with Yankee

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<sup>70</sup> Zebulon Butler to Benjamin Franklin, August 26, 1788, *SCP* 8:479; Murray, *History of Old Tioga*, 313, 326-327. For another example of Yankee bias in Luzerne County courts, see the Petition of Thomas Martin to the Pennsylvania Council, March 7, 1790, *SCP* 10:66.

settlers who formed a majority in its northern townships. Wayne County's large population of Connecticut claimants also used the law as a weapon against Pennsylvania claimants.<sup>71</sup>

Pennsylvania, armed with the Intrusion Act, struggled to regain control of the northeast frontier, but as long as local institutions remained under the thumb of Yankee insurgents, there was little the state could do to punish lawbreakers or protect Pennsylvania claimants. In July 1797, Judge Rush ordered the sheriff of Luzerne County to arrest Elisha Satterlee and a dozen other Connecticut claimants for illegally surveying and settling lands. This effort, like those that had preceded it, foundered in Luzerne County courts. Likewise, Tench Coxe registered his disapproval when a Luzerne County jury failed to find John Jenkins guilty of resisting the progress of a Pennsylvania surveying party, "tho the proof of the interruption . . . was clear and positive."<sup>72</sup> Without the cooperation of juries and witnesses, the Intrusion Act, no matter how potent it seemed on paper, would prove ineffective.

Numbers alone did not enable Wild Yankees to co-opt local government--their insurgency also depended upon the cooperation of a small group of leading Connecticut claimants. The number of votes Yankees could stuff into ballot boxes, or the number of men they could place in the jury box, would have been meaningless if they did not have experienced leaders who could serve as justices of the peace, judges, and other county officials. Fortunately for Wild Yankees, there was no shortage of talented candidates. Joseph Kinney became a judge of Luzerne County's court of common pleas in 1789. A year later, three other Yankee agitators joined Kinney as justices of the peace and judges

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<sup>71</sup> Rochefoucault-Liancourt, *Travels Through the United States*, 1:85-86; Ephraim Kirby to Tench Coxe, February 6, 1797, *SCP* 10:404; Goodrich, *History of Wayne County*, 133-134.

<sup>72</sup> Jacob Rush to Thomas Mifflin, July 1, 1797, *SCP* 10:440-441; Jacob Rush to the Sheriff of Luzerne County, July 17, 1797, *Ibid.*, 441-442; Tench Coxe to Presley C. Lane, January 3, 1801, *SCP* 11:4.

for the court of common pleas.<sup>73</sup> Likewise, John Franklin made sure that local government remained in Yankee hands. Franklin, who had only recently been pardoned of his crimes against the state, became sheriff of Luzerne County in 1792, a post he held for four years. With Franklin in charge of this key position, it is little wonder that Pennsylvania found it difficult to enforce the Intrusion Act. Franklin's rise to sheriff marked only the beginning of his political career. In 1793 he became the lieutenant-colonel of Luzerne County's upper militia battalion. Furthermore, Franklin served as a representative in the Pennsylvania legislature in 1795, 1796, 1799, and from 1800 to 1803. Now, instead of avoiding state authority, Wild Yankees obtained important county and state offices that enabled them to better defend their interests.<sup>74</sup>

Casper Singer and Resolved Sessions gained firsthand experience of how leading Wild Yankees used public office to undermine state authority and dispossess Pennsylvania claimants. When insurgents trespassed upon his land, Singer made a complaint to three Yankee justices who, instead of offering any aid, "laughed at him for pretending to hold any lands under Pennsylvania." Later, Singer lost thirty-one dollars in court fees after a grand jury failed to support his charges of intrusion against Yankee neighbors.<sup>75</sup> In a similar fashion, Sessions became subject to verbal abuse and threats from Yankee leading men. On one occasion, Joseph Kinney reproached Sessions for purchasing a Pennsylvania title and told him that he would never hold land under the state "as long as water runs in the susquehanna."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Murray, *History of Old Tioga*, 334; Timothy Pickering to Thomas Mifflin, August 16, 1791, *SCP* 10:147-148; Pearce, *Annals of Luzerne County*, 242-243.

<sup>74</sup> Pearce, *Annals of Luzerne*, 524; James Edward Brady, "Wyoming: A Study of John Franklin and the Connecticut Settlement into Pennsylvania" (Ph.D. diss., Syracuse Univ, 1973), 275-276, 288, 301.

<sup>75</sup> Deposition of Casper Singer, November 11, 1796, *SCP* 10:389; Deposition of Casper Singer, January 26, 1797, *Ibid.*, 400-401.

<sup>76</sup> Deposition of Resolved Sessions, July 31, 1797, *SCP* 10:444; George Head and Others to Thomas Mifflin, June 19, 1797, *Ibid.*, 438-439.

The threats and abuse of Yankee settlers, combined with the power of Yankee officeholders, squeezed Pennsylvania claimants off the land. The end came from Resolved Sessions when local "poormasters" and Yankee stalwarts Job Irish and Jehiel Franklin came to Sessions' home accompanied by another Connecticut claimant, Justice Moses Coolbaugh. The three men accused Sessions's recently deceased landlord, Casper Singer, of having "unlawfully" fathered two children by Elizabeth Freeton. Irish and Franklin then inventoried Singer's property--including the home Sessions occupied, the crops he stored, and the tools he used--and slated them for confiscation under the pretense that the proceeds would go towards the support of Freeton's children. To add insult to injury, they also forced Sessions' son to pay twenty dollars for the use he had gotten of the property since Singer's death. Hiding behind a facade of due process, Connecticut claimants robbed Sessions and his son of their property and drove them from their home.<sup>77</sup>

Frontier expansion played an important role in shaping agrarian unrest and local culture along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier. Unbridled speculation and high levels of migration generated new interest in the Connecticut claim and helped to reinvigorate Yankee resistance. Moreover, the rapid, often disorderly, surge of frontier settlement that followed the revolutionary war provided opportunities for migrants to establish local autonomy and sustain the parochial ethos and face-to-face social relationships that were the foundations of backcountry localism. Speculators and settlers, commercialism and localism came together along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier and, for a time, worked together to undermine state rule.

As quickly as it had arisen, however, America's speculation boom ended and made way for a more moderate pace of land development. Once the Northwest Territory became more accessible to settlers, speculators who had invested in backcountry regions farther

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<sup>77</sup> Deposition of Resolved Sessions, July 31, 1797, *SCP* 10:446-447.

east suffered from dropping demand and declining land values. More important, the speculating boom of the 1790s had been built upon irresponsible investments and shady land-grabbing schemes. It was only a matter of time before the land market suffered from its own excesses.<sup>78</sup> Early in 1797 Tench Coxe received word from an associate in New York City that land speculation had reached a low ebb and that "a man would be pitied or laughed at who should let it be known he had a wish to effect sales." The rapid decline of the land market caused financial ruin for many prominent speculators. Indeed, Connecticut claimant Clement Paine wrote that "many persons of the first respectability in business" were hardly able to "keep their heads above water." The great land magnates Robert Morris, James Wilson, and John Nicholson ended up bankrupt or in debtors' prison as a result of unwise speculating ventures--their fate reflected that of scores of frontier speculators.<sup>79</sup>

Changes in the land market continued to shape Yankee insurgency. The declining commercial value of frontier lands did not stop the flow of backcountry migrants to northeast Pennsylvania, but tough financial conditions did force many speculators out of the land market and caused those who remained to take a much less indulgent attitude toward settlers. As the profit-making potential of frontier lands declined, speculators found that it was increasingly important to squeeze more and more money out of settlers who occupied their lands. In short, land developers who faced financial difficulties passed on the pressure to frontier inhabitants, and one result was the decline of settler-speculator relations. Many Susquehanna Company proprietors pulled out of the Connecticut claim, leaving Yankee settlers to fend for themselves. Meanwhile, Pennsylvania landholders,

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<sup>78</sup> Wyckoff, *The Developer's Frontier*, 10-11; Wilkinson, *Land Policy and Speculation*, 184; Doerflinger, *Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, 323-326.

<sup>79</sup> Samuel A. Law to Tench Coxe, February 14, 1797, *SCP* 10:411; Clement Paine to Seth Paine, May 10, 1799, *Ibid.*, 474; Mancall, *Valley of Opportunity*, 170; Wilkinson, *Land Policy and Speculation*, 236-254.

determined to fight for every acre of their property, banded together to promote a fresh wave of anti-Yankee initiatives.

## CHAPTER VI WILD YANKEES

*Without a most watchful eye to Luzerne, and the most thorough execution of the laws, that Country will become a den of men worse than savages or beasts of pray. No Civil, political, or personal virtues can flourish there until a complete change shall be enforced; and property will continue but a vexatious name.--Tench Coxe, July 1801<sup>1</sup>*

Local culture and Yankee resistance became closely intertwined in the first decade of the nineteenth century; a period of when the backcountry contest for property and power reached its climax. The experience of Bartlett Hinds, a settler who resided near the headwaters of Wyalusing Creek, illustrates how localism and insurgency intersected. In December 1802, Hinds ran afoul of an angry mob in a Susquehannah Company settlement known as Usher. Hinds had come to this well-known Wild Yankee stronghold to defend himself against a lawsuit initiated by several of Usher's inhabitants. Little did he realize that he had walked into a trap. Yankee partisan and Justice of the Peace Daniel Ross purposefully delayed the hearing until late in the afternoon, forcing Hinds to stay for the night. That evening, a large gang of settlers forced their way into his lodgings and pushed him outside. The rioters tied Hinds to a horse's tail, and then, prodding the animal to a gallop, dragged him through Wyalusing Creek. Next, the mob pulled Hinds from the water, tore off his clothes, and drew him around (and sometimes through) a bonfire topped with his own flaming effigy. Burnt, but still alive, the rioters released Hinds,

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<sup>1</sup> Tench Coxe to Henry Drinker, Edward Tilghman, and Samuel Hodgdon, July 22, 1801, Robert J. Taylor, ed., *The Susquehannah Company Papers*, 11 vols. (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1971), 11:145 (hereafter cited as *SCP*).

warning him that if he did not leave the country in three months they would put him to death.<sup>2</sup>

Hinds became a victim of Yankee violence because two years earlier he had relinquished his Connecticut deeds and repurchased his land under Pennsylvania. However, as in the past, there was a strong current of local contention and interpersonal conflict underlying this act of insurgency. The settlers who lashed out against Hinds did so not only because he threatened the integrity of the Connecticut claim, but because he had given testimony that resulted in the arrest and prosecution of several of their neighbors. Thus, this episode of unrest cannot be fully explained in terms of contention between Connecticut and Pennsylvania claimants. Rather, it needs to be understood in the context of how Pennsylvania's state government and its landholders altered the face of Yankee resistance after the turn of the century.

After 1800, Pennsylvania finally broke the power of the Susquehannah and Delaware companies, changing Yankee resistance from a regional movement coordinated by speculators into a fragmented, highly localized insurgency manned and managed by backcountry settlers. Two developments paralleled this process of localization. First, the backcountry entrepreneurs who had been so active in fomenting settler unrest in the 1790s fell back from their commitment to resistance. They were replaced by poorer, less commercially oriented settlers who brought insurgency back under the control of Yankee communities. Second, Wild Yankees became less concerned with maintaining the legal standing of the Connecticut claim and more preoccupied with protecting their families and neighbors from ejectment. Indeed, the settlers who mobbed Hinds did so not only (or even primarily) out of loyalty to the Connecticut claim, but to settle a local dispute by punishing a man who had betrayed them.

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<sup>2</sup> Samuel Hodgdon to Timothy Pickering, January 13, 1803, *SCP* 11:368; Emily C. Blackman, *History of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, 1873), 21-22.



Wild Yankees stopped looking to Connecticut land companies for support and turned to neighborhood networks and traditions of popular protest to mobilize resistance. Again, the riot in Usher illustrates the point. The attack on Bartlet Hinds was timed not only with reference to the larger struggle over property and power in the backcountry, but with reference to the ebb and flow of life in a single backcountry settlement. The riot took place during a “drunken Christmas frolic.” Christmas was traditionally a time of disorder, when people temporarily challenged social norms. The attack on Hinds grew out of this context. Indeed, one state official argued that this episode of agrarian unrest owed less to the influence of the Susquehannah Company than to local conflicts and the influence of alcohol.<sup>3</sup>

The fight for the Connecticut claim and the struggle for agrarian independence remained closely intertwined, but the partnership between settlers and speculators that had sustained Yankee insurgency came to an end in the 1800s. As settlers took on the burden of resistance, the dialogue that had existed between localism and commercialism was replaced by a dialogue between local culture and traditions of popular protest. After the turn of the century, Yankee insurgency became increasingly localized, but this does not mean that settlers’ local culture became segregated from events that took place beyond the frontier. On the contrary, rural localism and the translocal forces that shaped the American backcountry remained in close contact with one another; indeed, it would be difficult to understand the evolution of Wild Yankee resistance without reference to the activities of state officials and powerful Pennsylvania speculators.

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Cooper to Thomas McKean, January 18, 1803, *SCP* 11:369. For a discussion of the long-standing relationship between social disorder and Christmas celebrations see Herbert Halpert, “A Typology of Mumming,” in Herbert Halpert and G.M. Story, ed., *Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1969), 55; and Susan G. Davis, *Parades and Power: Street Theater in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1986).

### **Pennsylvania Takes the Initiative**

At the close of the eighteenth century, Pennsylvania and its landholders redoubled their efforts to win control of the northeast frontier. Through a series of new laws, Pennsylvania severed the ties that had united Yankee insurgents with Connecticut land companies and rooted out settlers who held land under Connecticut deeds. The riot that left Bartlett Hinds beaten and burned was a product of this offensive. Indeed, Pennsylvania planted the seeds of this disturbance in 1801 when it indicted Hinds under the intrusion law. Fearing the loss of his lands, Hinds cooperated with state authorities by repurchasing his land from Pennsylvania and giving testimony that led to the prosecution of a dozen Wyalusing settlers. Soon, a rumor circulated around the creek that Hinds had received five acres of land from Pennsylvania for every settler he helped to indict. Angered by Hind's defection, Wild Yankees bided their time and planned their revenge<sup>4</sup>

Contention among Yankees increased as Pennsylvania officials journeyed into the backcountry armed with a series of laws and initiatives designed to undermine the Connecticut claim and extinguish settler resistance to state rule. Pennsylvania gained the upper hand in their fight for the northeast frontier by combining legislation that offered secure titles to compromise-minded Yankees with laws that meted out harsh punishments to settlers and speculators who continued to support the Connecticut claim. This strategy opened a fissure between settlers who lived in the Wyoming Valley and those who occupied raw backcountry settlements to the north. Equally important, the state used its new legal arsenal to undermine the influence of the Susquehannah and Delaware companies and unhinge the settler-speculator alliance that had bolstered Yankee resistance since the 1780s. Disheartened by setbacks and intimidated by Pennsylvania's aggressive

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<sup>4</sup> Blackman, *History of Susquehanna County*, 21-22; Document no. 1 attached to letter of Samuel Hodgdon and James Strawbridge to Landholders' Committee, November 26, 1801, Minutes of the Pennsylvania Landholders' Association, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; List of Persons Presented Under the Intrusion Act, Connecticut Claims Papers, 1:187, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter cited as CCP).

stance, the non-resident speculators who had proved so crucial to development of settler resistance in the past now abandoned the Connecticut claim.

In the spring of 1799 Pennsylvania took the first step in a series of moves that would ultimately resolve land disputes in and around the Wyoming Valley. On April 4, the state legislature passed an act that allowed settlers holding Connecticut deeds that pre-dated the Trenton Decree to obtain Pennsylvania titles to their lands. Known as the Compromise Act, this law established a three-man commission to assess the legitimacy of settlers' claims, survey their tracts, and divide their land into four categories according to its value. Settlers who had their Connecticut deeds confirmed by the commissioners had to pay, in eight annual installments, between eight cents to two dollars per acre for their farms. The proceeds from these sales went toward defraying the cost of compensating Pennsylvania claimants who lost property to Connecticut settlers.<sup>5</sup>

As with the Confirming Act of 1787, the compromise law encouraged Connecticut claimants holding deeds issued before and during the revolutionary war to move toward reconciliation with the state and to turn their backs on settlers who held titles issued after the Trenton Decree. After some initial hesitation, the lure of secure titles at low prices assured the act's acceptance among Yankee settlers in Susquehanna Company towns that had been established before the Trenton Decree. These fifteen towns covered the Wyoming Valley and adjacent lands extending up the Susquehanna River as far as the town of Claverack at the mouth of Sugar Creek.

More than any other person, Thomas Cooper can be credited with the success of the Compromise Act. Cooper was one of the men appointed to serve on the Compromise Act commission and quickly established himself as the body's leading member. He took a no-nonsense approach to administering the law and brooked little interference from

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<sup>5</sup> The Compromise Act of 1799, April 4, 1799, *SCP* 10:468-474.

Pennsylvania landowners, Connecticut claimants, or state officials who attempted to hinder its progress. Cooper's singlemindedness paid off. By February 1800, Pennsylvania claimants had relinquished almost 100,000 acres to the state and Connecticut claimants had applied for title to nearly 50,000 acres. Pennsylvania claimants who refused to turn over their land to the state commissioners presented the final barrier to the success of the compromise law. The Pennsylvania legislature overcame this obstacle in 1802 when it authorized the commissioners to confiscate land from uncooperative Pennsylvanians so that the property could be used to satisfy the claims of Yankee settlers.<sup>6</sup> By October of the same year, almost one thousand Connecticut claimants had submitted to the state. A few months later, the commissioners of the Compromise Act reported that they had completed the valuations and surveys for all but three of the towns included under the law's provisions. In November 1803, the commissioners informed Governor Thomas McKean that they had completed their work and settled all land claims in the fifteen towns.<sup>7</sup>

While the Compromise Act quieted Connecticut claimants in and around the Wyoming Valley, other pieces of legislation sought to end resistance outside of the fifteen towns by threatening Wild Yankees with higher fines and longer prison terms. In February 1801, the state amended the Intrusion Act. Under the revised law, intruders faced fines up to one thousand dollars and prison terms that ranged from six months to seven years. Moreover, the new law authorized the appointment of an agent who would scour the backcountry to root out settlers holding Connecticut deeds. This feature of the amended Intrusion Act took the job of enforcement out of the hands of local officials whose loyalty to the state was questionable and whose unwillingness to enforce unpopular laws was well

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<sup>6</sup> Tench Coxe to the House of Representatives, February 13, 1800, *SCP* 10:494-495; Amendments to the Compromise Act, April 26, 1802, *Ibid.*, 311-315.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Cooper to Thomas McKean, October 20, 1802, *SCP* 11:336; John Steele and William Wilson to Thomas McKean, December 6, 1802, *Ibid.*, 343; Thomas Cooper and John M. Taylor to Thomas McKean, November 18, 1803, *Ibid.*, 431.

documented, and placed it in the hands of a government appointee who reported directly to the governor and the assembly.<sup>8</sup>

Pennsylvania's lawmakers also made it more dangerous for speculators to dabble in the Connecticut claim and freed the courts of northeast Pennsylvania from Yankee influence. In the spring of 1802 the state passed a piece of legislation entitled "an Act to maintain the territorial rights" of Pennsylvania. This law struck at the proprietors of the Susquehannah and Delaware companies by making it illegal to purchase, sell, or transfer land under Connecticut deeds issued after the Trenton Decree; those who did would face heavy fines and imprisonment. Equally important, the act worked to undo the Yankee domination of courts along the northeast frontier by making it illegal for individuals holding Connecticut titles to serve as judges or jurors in cases that concerned land claims.<sup>9</sup>

At the turn of the century, several New England states also passed court rulings that helped to overthrow the Connecticut claim. Judges in Connecticut and neighboring states ruled that deeds and certificates issued by the Susquehannah and Delaware companies were not admissible as evidence in court. Further undercutting the legal standing of the corporations, the courts decided that land grants issued by the Susquehannah and Delaware companies rested on fraudulent Indian purchases. This ruling was devastating to the companies' fortunes: money paid toward the purchase of Connecticut deeds was to be returned to the purchasers and notes and bonds issued by the companies were declared "void & not obligatory." Once New England turned its back on the Susquehannah and Delaware companies, speculators lost confidence in the Connecticut claim and withdrew their support. Edward Tilghman, a Pennsylvania land developer with considerable holdings along the northeast frontier, traveled through Connecticut late in the summer of 1802 and happily reported that he found no one in the state who would admit to membership in the

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<sup>8</sup> Amendment to the Intrusion Act, February 16, 1801, *SCP* 11:27-31.

<sup>9</sup> Proposed Act to Maintain the Territorial Rights of Pennsylvania, February, 6, 1801, *SCP* 11:34-36.

Susquehannah and Delaware companies. Tilghman concluded that Pennsylvania's Wild Yankees provided the Connecticut claim with its only remaining base of support.<sup>10</sup>

State legislation was not the only feature of Pennsylvania's attack on Yankee insurgents and the Connecticut claim. Around the turn of the century, powerful Pennsylvania speculators combined their strength in a collective effort to win control of the northeast frontier. As the power of Pennsylvania's land developers waxed, the fortitude of Yankee speculators waned. Faced with a combined assault from state governments and some of the early republic's leading land magnates, the non-resident proprietors of the Susquehannah and Delaware companies retreated from the contest.

Pennsylvania's state government was not the only power working to uproot Yankee resistance. In 1801 a new force entered the Wyoming dispute when speculators holding hundreds of thousands of acres in northeast Pennsylvania banded together to create an organization known as the Pennsylvania Landholders Association. The syndicate met at Dunwoody's Tavern in Philadelphia and from this headquarters coordinated their efforts to subdue Yankee resistance. The Landholders' Association brought together men of considerable wealth and social standing who used their considerable influence to promote legislation that favored their interests. Among the associations' members were Henry Drinker, William Bingham, Samuel Meredith, Samuel Hodgdon, Timothy Pickering, James Strawbridge, and other prominent land speculators who had battled Wild Yankees through the 1780s and 90s. Drinker, Strawbridge, and Tilghman served on the Association's executive committee while Hodgdon held the position of association president.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Timothy Pitkin, Jr. to Jeremiah Wadsworth, February 17, 1801, *SCP* 11:32-33; Henry Drinker to Samuel Preston, December 3, 1799, Henry Drinker Papers, Letterbook, 1786-1790, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Clement Paine to Seth Paine, May 10, 1799, *SCP* 10:474; Edward Tilghman to Jason Torrey, September 1802, Jason Torrey Papers, Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

<sup>11</sup> Meeting of the Pennsylvania Claimants, Held at Dunwoody's in 1801, William H. Egle,

Samuel Meredith, a successful Philadelphia merchant who held over 80,000 acres in northeast Pennsylvania, epitomized the power of the Association's members. In addition to his considerable commercial and landed interests, Meredith possessed a wealth of political connections. He developed these ties while serving in the Pennsylvania legislature, in Congress, and as treasurer of the United States.<sup>12</sup> Like many of his associates, he was well placed to forward the Landholders' interests at both the state and national levels. Fully aware of the clout wielded by the Pennsylvania Landholders, many state officials sought their patronage and became willing instruments of their designs. For example, Abraham Horn, who was appointed in 1801 as the agent to enforce the intrusion law, readily cooperated with the Association and, in return for a salary from the landholders, submitted reports to them detailing the location and disposition of Yankee settlers. Tench Coxe also readily cooperated with the Landholders' Association while he served as secretary of the Pennsylvania land office between 1800 and 1801. He did so, not for a salary, but to help himself secure his own land claims along the northeast frontier.<sup>13</sup>

With the creation of the Landholders' Association, Pennsylvania speculators finally found themselves in a position to exploit their superior wealth and political power. The Association provided Pennsylvania's landlords with the organization and coherence they needed to counter the influence of the Susquehannah and Delaware companies. This is not to say that the Landholders' Association brought resistance to a swift end; however, it did deliver state landholders from a situation in which it was nearly impossible for them to compete with Yankee insurgents to one in which progress toward securing possession of their lands, though slow and halting, was possible.

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ed., *Pennsylvania Archives*, 2nd ser., 19 vols. (Harrisburg: E.B. Meyers, 1890), 18:757-758; William Tilghman to Tench Coxe, January 13, 1801, *SCP* 11:14; Organization of the Pennsylvania Landholders Association, April 9, 1801, *Ibid.*, 40-43.

<sup>12</sup> Phineas G. Goodrich, *History of Wayne County* (Honesdale, PA: Haines & Beardsley, 1880), 199-200.

<sup>13</sup> *SCP* 11:xiv, xviii, xx.

As Pennsylvania and its landholders moved forward, the Delaware and Susquehannah companies lost momentum. Discouraged by their inability to secure any aid from Connecticut or the federal government and disheartened by Pennsylvania's renewed efforts to secure its soil rights, speculators abandoned the Connecticut claim. Relations between Connecticut claimants and the non-resident proprietors of the Susquehannah and Delaware companies had always been marked by disagreements and moments of mutual suspicion. On one occasion, John Franklin wrote to Joseph Hamilton complaining of outsiders' failure to live up to their obligations to the Susquehannah Company. On another, John Jenkins hinted at the lukewarm loyalty of many non-resident speculators when he observed that "frend[s] are Good but . . . one frend in this Country is Better than ten thousand Else where." David Paine, an inhabitant of Athens and the assistant clerk of the Susquehannah Company, confided his suspicions of the company's non-resident speculators to his brother when he asserted that outsiders made "fair promisses" but "failed to advance a farthing" in support of the Connecticut claim. After the passage of the intrusion and territorial acts, such complaints became more common as non-resident proprietors withdrew their money and support.<sup>14</sup>

Without the assistance of non-resident speculators such as Caleb Benton and William Judd, support for the Connecticut claim in New England and New York waned, further isolating Pennsylvania's Wild Yankees. In September 1801, John Franklin noted that Silas Pepoon and other Yankee speculators failed to maintain their ties with the company. Even Joseph Hamilton, a firebrand of Yankee resistance during the 1780s and 1790s, neglected to answer Franklin's calls for aid. In the following year, Franklin openly criticized the company's non-resident proprietors, complaining that Yankee settlers bore the brunt of persecution while speculators failed to pay their dues to the company or to attend its

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<sup>14</sup> John Jenkins to Joseph Hamilton, July 6, 1796, *SCP* 10:358; David Paine to Clement Paine, May 30, 1797, *Ibid.*, 437.



meetings. By 1803 the Susquehannah Company--which remained based in Athens, Pennsylvania--found itself bereft of outside support and badly in need of money.<sup>15</sup>

Deserted by non-resident proprietors, disavowed by the state of Connecticut, and faced with growing dissent among Connecticut claimants, the Susquehannah and Delaware companies slowly distanced themselves from agrarian violence and became advocates of accommodation.<sup>16</sup> As early as the summer of 1801, the guiding light of the Susquehannah Company, John Franklin, wrote to a Pennsylvania landholder expressing his desire to end the dispute. In the letter, Franklin admitted his willingness to compromise and settle the dispute before a federal court. In October, 1802, company proprietors appointed John Franklin and Samuel Avery to open talks with the Landholders' Association. The negotiations that followed between the company and the Association were complex and took many years to complete.<sup>17</sup> The Pennsylvanians refused to recognize the right of Connecticut claimants to bargain collectively or to appoint representatives such as Franklin and Avery to handle what they saw as a series of disputes between legitimate landholders and illegal squatters. The Association also refused to settle the conflict before a federal court or to extend the terms of the Compromise Act to lands they owned outside of the fifteen towns. By 1805 these issues remained unresolved. However, even in the face of this lack of progress, the proprietors of the Susquehannah Company remained committed to a negotiated settlement.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> John Franklin to John Jenkins, September 16, 1801, *SCP* 11:195; John Franklin to Ira Allen, June 27, 1802, *Ibid.*, 331-332--for a similar complaint see, Joseph Kingsberry to Ezekiel Hyde, August 4, 1803, *Ibid.*, 403-404.

<sup>16</sup> John Franklin to John Jenkins, April 22, 1801, *SCP* 11:45; Letter of May 22, 1801, *CCP*, 1:62.

<sup>17</sup> John Franklin to John Field, July 21, 1801, *SCP* 11:141-142; Louise Wells Murray, *A History of Old Tioga Point and Early Athens* (Wilkes-Barre, PA: Reader Press, 1907), 409; John Franklin and Samuel Avery to Samuel Hodgdon and Edward Tilghman, December 6, 1802, *SCP* 11:344-345.

<sup>18</sup> Memorial of the Susquehannah Company to the Pennsylvania Legislature, *SCP* 11:360; Connecticut Claimants to the Pennsylvania Landholders' Association, February 23, 1803,

Not everything went Pennsylvania's way after the passage of the Compromise Act. Resistance to Pennsylvania's authority and soil rights even deepened in areas outside the fifteen towns. The state government and the Landholders' Association, instead of acting as partners, often squabbled about how best to uproot the Connecticut claim. Internally, the Association was plagued by ineffective agents and uncooperative members who hindered progress. State efforts to win control of the backcountry also suffered from infighting. Indeed, contention between the commissioners of the Compromise Act and other government authorities threatened to derail the process of accommodation on several occasions.

The same aggressive attitude that had enabled Thomas Cooper to forge ahead with the Compromise Act also brought him into conflict with more conservative officials in the Pennsylvania land office. Cooper wrote to Tench Coxe admitting that his "liberal construction" of the act clashed with Coxe's "notions of Prudence and legal precision." For example, when Connecticut claimants handed in relinquishments after deadlines for submission had passed, the commissioners were willing to accept them while Coxe considered the Yankees' tardiness grounds for the dismissal of their claims. The commissioners had no better luck with Coxe's replacement, Andrew Ellicott. On several occasions, Cooper complained of Ellicott's foot-dragging and of his refusal to issue state deeds to Connecticut claimants even after the commissioners had confirmed their claims. Outraged by Ellicott's duplicity, Cooper wrote to the secretary telling him that he had spread "far and wide distrust of the State proceedings." Although mismanagement of the

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Ibid., 373-374; Samuel Hodgdon and Edward Tilghman to Samuel Avery, Joseph Kingsberry, and John Spalding, March 16, 1803, Records of the Pennsylvania Landholders' Association, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Correspondence between John Franklin and the Pennsylvania Landholders' Association is printed in *The Luzerne County Federalist*, April 6 and April 13, 1805.

Compromise Act only effected settlers in the fifteen towns, it acted to undermine the state's credibility across the backcountry.<sup>19</sup>

The progress made by the state commissioners in the fifteen towns was not matched elsewhere along the northeast frontier. Instead of handling the settlement of Connecticut claims on their own, state officials who ventured beyond the Wyoming Valley had to coordinate their efforts with the Pennsylvania Landholders' Association. On the one hand, Association agents depended upon state officials to enforce the Intrusion Act, for without this deterrent they found it very difficult to avoid Yankee mobs or to coax settlers into giving up their Connecticut deeds. On the other hand, state officials depended upon the Association for the intelligence and evidence they needed to bring Wild Yankees to trial. However, instead of cooperating in this fashion, Association agents often found themselves bereft of government support and vice versa. This gap between the state and its landholders gave Yankee insurgents room to maneuver.

Pennsylvania landholders found it difficult to find competent agents who were ready and willing to enforce their authority in the backcountry. In many cases, the Landholders' Association chose men to represent them who were wholly unfit for the job. Connecticut claimants described these emissaries as "Pimps, Spies, tidewaiters, and Informers" who distressed honest yeomen by stealing their property and threatening them with criminal prosecution. James Ralston, who replaced Abraham Horn as the agent of the Intrusion Act in 1803, admitted that there was truth to these accusation and believed that settler resistance would lessen once the Association found agents who would "conduct the business with fairness, temper & decision" and not "stoop to take those petty advantages of the Settlers, which Appears to be the Order of the day among those already

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<sup>19</sup> For evidence of Cooper's cantankerous relations with Pennsylvania's land office see Thomas Cooper to Tench Coxe, August 1801, *SCP* 11:185-86; Thomas Cooper to Andrew Ellicott, July 8, 1802, *Ibid.*, 333-334; Thomas Cooper to Andrew Ellicott, January 14, 1804, *Ibid.*, 496-471; and Thomas Cooper to Thomas McKean, August 1, 1804, *Ibid.*, 495-496.

appointed."<sup>20</sup> Abraham Horn provides a good example of this corruption. After graduating from his position as an informant to the Landholders' Association, Horn became their chief agent.<sup>21</sup> While serving in this capacity he mixed public duties with private interests; indeed, Horn worked for the Pennsylvania landholders while still holding his post as the state's intrusion agent. That the intrusion law specified that half of any fine levied against an intruder would be awarded to the informer who brought the prosecution encouraged Horn to take advantage of his situation. Horn brought prosecutions against settlers in behalf of the Landholders' Association, used his position as agent of the Intrusion Act to push these indictments through the courts, and then pocketed his share of any fines. Instead of opening negotiations with settlers, he attempted to entrap them. Both Thomas Cooper and James Ralston censured this practice and argued that such a conflict of interest made it difficult to successfully prosecute intruders and did "incalculable" damage to the state's reputation.<sup>22</sup>

Compounding the indiscretion of the land agents of the Pennsylvania Landholders' was their ineffectiveness. For instance, the landholders discovered that over three fourths of the submissions that Horn had managed to collect during his tenure as the Association's head agent were not from Connecticut claimants but from squatters who held neither a Pennsylvania nor a Connecticut title. This practice not only failed to uproot Yankee resistance but created a false impression of progress. State officials often suffered from a similar lack of ability. James Ralston, for all his protests against the practices of his

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<sup>20</sup> Memorial of the Susquehannah Company to the Pennsylvania Legislature, *SCP* 11:364-365; James Ralston to the Landholders' Committee, May 17, 1803, Records of the Pennsylvania Landholders.

<sup>21</sup> Samuel Hodgdon to Timothy Pickering, March 21, 1801, *SCP* 11:38; *Ibid.*, xix-xx; Abraham Horn to the Committee of the Pennsylvania Landholders, September 14, 1801, *Ibid.*, 95; James Strawbridge to Edward Tilghman, July 13, 1801, *Ibid.*, 126-127; Abraham Horn to the Connecticut Intruders, June 24, 1801, *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Cooper to Tench Coxe, August 1801, *SCP* 11:186-187; James Ralston to the Landholders' Committee, May 17, 1803, Records of the Pennsylvania Landholders.

predecessor Abraham Horn, was equally unwilling to confront Wild Yankees. One Pennsylvania claimant complained that Ralston had failed to familiarize himself with Yankee settlers and remained "ignorant" of the location and strength of the intruders. Likewise, after traveling deep into territory controlled by Wild Yankees, Association agent Robert Rose bitterly remarked, "M<sup>r</sup>. Ralston has not been here, and where he slumbers I do not know."<sup>23</sup>

Another obstacle in the way of the Landholders' Association was their failure to successfully prosecute settlers under the Intrusion Act. Even though Connecticut claimants were barred from serving as jurors or justices in cases involving land disputes, Yankees found other ways to hobble the legal process. For instance, county commissioners partial to the Connecticut claim refused to pay Association witnesses any compensation for the time they spent at court. Without pay, witnesses would not come to court. Without witnesses to testify against them, those indicted under the Intrusion Act went free.<sup>24</sup> Even after the passage of the Territorial Act in March 1802, Yankees continued to escape prosecution by questioning the constitutionality of the intrusion law.<sup>25</sup> In the summer of 1801, a Luzerne court indicted John Franklin, John Jenkins, Elisha Satterlee, and Joseph Biles of illegally conspiring to sell state lands. Their trial became a test case for the legitimacy of the Intrusion Act when a jury found Franklin and Jenkins guilty, but stated that their verdict depended upon the constitutionality of the intrusion law. Pennsylvania's supreme court decided in favor of the law's constitutionality

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<sup>23</sup> Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, August 4, 1803, *SCP* 11:406; John Kidd to Edward Tilghman, February 18, 1803, *CCP* 2:10; Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, November 2, 1803, *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>24</sup> Report of Abraham Horn to the Landholders' Committee, February 18, 1802 (copied from a letter by William Dean, February 3, 1802), *CCP* 1:117.

<sup>25</sup> Summary of Court Proceedings in Luzerne and Wayne Counties, December 17, 1801, *SCP* 11:250-251; Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, November 26, 1803, *CCP* 2:68; Documents no. 1 & no. 2 attached to Samuel Hodgdon and James Strawbridge to Landholders' Committee, November 26, 1801, Minutes of the Pennsylvania Landholders.

in December 1802. Thus, only in 1803 did the intrusion law begin to have a significant impact in the backcountry.<sup>26</sup>

The final stumbling block facing the Landholders' Association--one that would persist till the end of the dispute--was the attitudes and actions of the landowners themselves. Many of these speculators were unfamiliar with their lands and possessed exaggerated notions of their value. This, in turn, led many landholders to set their prices far beyond the means of most Yankee settlers. Robert Rose, who replaced Abraham Horn as the Association's chief agent in 1802, explained that Connecticut claimants who lived on land not worth more than half-dollar an acre stared "with astonishment" when he told them they would have to pay five times that amount to purchase a Pennsylvania deed. Settlers who could not afford to pay for Pennsylvania titles continued to resist. Land disputes between association members also contributed to the survival of agrarian unrest. James Ralston reported that opposition to state rule had reemerged along Towanda Creek after a Pennsylvania claimant brought ejectment proceedings against settlers who had recently purchased state titles for their lands from another Pennsylvania landholder.<sup>27</sup> Finally, landholders also held up the process of reconciliation through their own neglect. On more than one occasion, Rose had to inform the landholders' committee that his negotiations with Yankee settlers had been foiled by Pennsylvania claimants who failed to transfer power of attorney to him.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Jury Verdict in the Trial of John Franklin and Others, May 6, 1802, *SCP* 11:318-319; Ebenezer Bowman to Samuel Hodgdon, May 10, 1802, *Ibid.*, 322-323; *Ibid.*, xxiii; Murray, *History of Old Tioga*, 415.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Rose to Henry Drinker, October 10, 1803, *SCP* 11:420; James Ralston to the Committee of the Pennsylvania Landholders, December 10, 1803, *Ibid.*, 442.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, July 28, 1803, *CCP* 2:40; Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, August 11, 1803, *Ibid.*, 43; Robert Rose to Henry Drinker, September 1, 1803, *Ibid.*, 59; Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, September 10, 1803, *Ibid.*, 57; Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, September 17, 1803, *Ibid.*, 58.

Though plagued by setbacks, Pennsylvania and the Landholders' Association put together a highly effective offensive against the Connecticut claim. Wild Yankees looked to their communities to provide them with the unity and support they needed to respond to this challenge. Standing alone against the combined force of Pennsylvania and its most powerful speculators, the frontier's settler insurgents retreated into isolated backwoods neighborhoods from whence they waged a fierce, last-ditch struggle.

### **Localism & Insurgency**

After 1800 localism reemerged as a guiding force behind Yankee resistance. Captain Bartlet Hinds' violent confrontation with Usher's Wild Yankees illustrates this development. The riot against Hinds was a local affair, planned and carried out by vengeful settlers. Thomas Cooper assured Governor McKean that the riot at Usher arose "from [a] private revenge against Hinds" and owed "more to the fumes of liquor more than to any permanent, or systematic opposition." Cooper's assessment of the disturbance, though an accurate account of the facts, rests on a false distinction: the attack on Bartlet Hinds was as much a feature of the northeast frontier's contest over property and power as a private quarrel between Hinds and the settlers he betrayed to state authorities. Indeed, as had always been the case in the backcountry, no clear boundary separated agrarian insurgency from interpersonal disputes.<sup>29</sup>

The attack on Hinds, like other post-1800 episodes of agrarian violence, was not the product of a directive from Connecticut land companies, but the result of ordinary settlers taking collective action to defend their farms. The fate of the Wild Yankees who mobbed Bartlet Hinds supports this assertion. No longer shielded from prosecution by wealthy

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<sup>29</sup> Thomas Cooper to Thomas McKean, January 18, 1803, *SCP* 11:369. For a partial list of Hinds' assailants see David Craft, *History of Bradford County, Pennsylvania*, (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co., 1878), 46-47; and *The Luzerne County Federalist*, April 25, 1803. For a list of the settlers Hinds testified against see Abraham Horn to Tench Coxe, September 18, 1801, *CCP* 1:87.

speculators and a regional support network, eighteen of the settlers who took part in the riot found themselves before a Luzerne County magistrate in April 1803. Freed from Yankee influence by the territorial act of 1802, the court found fourteen of the settlers guilty and sentenced them to jail terms and hefty fines. Rather than charging the rioters a standard eighty-four dollars in court costs, a pro-Pennsylvania judge inflated the fee to eleven-hundred dollars. This, in addition to over fifteen-hundred dollars in fines, brought Hinds' assailants face to face with financial ruin. Now, instead of receiving preferential treatment from county courts, Wild Yankees could expect only harsh treatment. <sup>30</sup>

After the turn of the century, Wild Yankee resistance became more atomized, defensive, and local. Rather than fighting to protect the interests of non-resident speculators, Yankee insurgents focused on the more immediate goals of protecting their property, their communities, and their status as independent yeomen. Instead of maintaining an offensive against state authority as they had done in the 1790s, Wild Yankees roused themselves only on occasions when it was necessary to shield their settlements from invading land agents and surveyors or to punish Connecticut claimants who defected to Pennsylvania. In fact, Yankee insurgents spent just as much time enforcing unity within their own ranks as chasing off Pennsylvanians. Thus, agrarian resistance began to divide, not unify, Yankee settlements.

The targets and tactics chosen by Wild Yankees reflected the increasingly parochial tenor of their resistance. The insurgents switched from the offensive--expanding the Connecticut claim across northern Pennsylvania--to the defensive--protecting the lands they already held. Gone were the days when Yankee rebels plotted to kidnap leading state officials or contemplated independent statehood. However, just because opposition

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<sup>30</sup> Thomas Cooper to Thomas McKean, January 18, 1803, *SCP* 11:369; Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 46-47; *The Luzerne County Federalist*, April 25, 1803.



became more guarded and conservative does not mean that it became less determined or violent. Resistance endured and, in some settlements, became even more militant.

Bouts of unrest continued to flare up along the northeast frontier whenever Yankees felt threatened by sheriffs' deputies, land agents, and surveyors. Resistance remained particularly strong in a region that stretched from the Susquehanna to the south branch of the Tioga River and from the New York state line to Sugar Creek. Emissaries from the state of Pennsylvania or its landholders who entered this territory experienced persistent harassment, intimidation, and, at times, violent opposition. On one occasion, the inhabitants of Ulster gathered together and drove off William Ellis, a surveyor working for the Landholders' Association, when he attempted to run lines near their settlement. In a similar episode, people from the town of Smithfield searched the woods for Richard Caton, a land agent and surveyor for the Pennsylvania landholder Charles Carroll, when they got wind of the fact that Caton was at work nearby.<sup>31</sup> Yankee hostility was fueled by a prejudice against surveyors and land agents deeply ingrained in yeomen farmers across the American backcountry. John Adlum, a Pennsylvania surveyor who worked along the west branch of the Susquehanna, alluded to this animus when he noted that he and his compatriots were "generally looked upon as a tricky kind of people" by frontier inhabitants. Adlum claimed that settlers greeted the news of a surveyor's arrival "with as much satisfaction of a visit from his Satanic Majesty." Agents of the Landholders' Association were a favorite target of Yankee insurgents. A settler mob hunted after John Cummings, the Association's deputy agent for Lycoming County, with all the fixings necessary to administer a coat of tar and feathers.<sup>32</sup> Cummings managed to evade his pursuers; another deputy agent, Thomas Smiley, was not so fortunate.

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<sup>31</sup> Thomas Cooper to Thomas McKean, November 15, 1802, *SCP* 11:339; Thomas Cooper to Robert Rose, July 2, 1803, *Ibid.*, 393.

<sup>32</sup> Norman Wilkinson, "The 'Philadelphia Fever' in Northern Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania History* 20 (January 1953): 47; Tench Coxe to the Commissioners, July 29, 1801, Letters from the Secretary of the Land Office to the Commissioners, 1801-04, Pennsylvania

A confrontation between Wild Yankees and Association agent Thomas Smiley demonstrates that the insurgents, besides fending off the threat posed by invading surveyors and land agents, strove to purge internal dissent from their communities. Thomas Smiley differed from most envoys of the Landholders' Association because he was a local man rather than an outsider. A Baptist preacher and a self-proclaimed "born citizen of Pennsylvania," Smiley came from Hanover in Dauphin County and settled along Wyalusing Creek in 1795. Five years later he moved his homestead to Towanda Creek. Like many backcountry inhabitants, Smiley squatted on his land instead of purchasing a title. However, unlike most settlers along the northeast frontier, Smiley came to support state authority and disavow the Connecticut claim. On May 18, 1801, Smiley wrote to Abraham Horn on behalf of neighboring settlers who, like himself, desired to obtain Pennsylvania titles to their lands. Horn not only accepted Smiley's declaration of loyalty but also made him a deputy agent of the Landholders' Association for Luzerne County. In accepting this post, Smiley claimed that he was "sincere philanthropist" who only wished to bring peace and prosperity to his community. Wild Yankees saw him in a far less generous light.<sup>33</sup>

Thomas Smiley became a target of Yankee insurgents not only because of his ties to the Pennsylvania Landowners' Association but because he threatened local solidarity. Smiley took charge of the drive toward accommodation along Towanda Creek and collected over forty relinquishments from settlers during the summer of 1801. His actions soon provoked a response from Wild Yankees determined to enforce local unity. In the pre-dawn hours of July 8, a band of armed settlers, their faces obscured with blacking, entered a house where

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Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

<sup>33</sup> Clement F. Heverly, *Patriot and Pioneer Families of Bradford County, Pennsylvania*, 2 vols. (Towanda, PA: Bradford Star Print, 1915), 1:250; Thomas Smiley to Abraham Horn, May 18, 1801, in Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 45-46; Thomas Smiley to Samuel Hodgdon, July 16, 1801, in *Ibid.*, 45; Abraham Horn to the Intruders in Luzerne and Lycoming Counties, June 24, 1801, in *Ibid.*, 46.

Smiley lodged and roused him from his sleep. The insurgents placed a pistol to Smiley's chest and forced him to give up the relinquishments he had collected. The rioters then examined the relinquishments (taking note of who signed them) and ordered their captive to burn the papers. After Smiley complied with this demand, the rioters carried him some distance up Towanda Creek. There, in the seclusion of the forest, the settlers covered Smiley's head with tar and feathers before letting him go.<sup>34</sup>

The attack on Smiley highlights the numerous local struggles that pitted Wild Yankees against the more compromise-minded members of their communities. Neighborhood politics played a powerful role in shaping this and other episodes of conflict. Two years after Smiley's tar-and-feathering, Thomas Cooper described him as a sensible man who suffered such setbacks because "his character is not a good one among his neighbors." Cooper's statement confirms that face-to-face relationships continued to color agrarian unrest in the backcountry. Poor relations with his neighbors as well as his loyalty to Pennsylvania made Smiley a victim of Yankee violence.<sup>35</sup>

Surveyors and land agents were not the only targets of agrarian violence: settlers who challenged insurgents also became victims of abuse and community censure. Maintaining community consensus became a major pursuit of Wild Yankees after 1800. Insurgents shifted their gaze from the borders of their settlements and began to focus on the behavior of their neighbors. In more than one settlement, contention broke out between settlers who wanted to cooperate with the Landholders' Association and those who remained firm in their commitment to defending Yankee soil rights. For instance, Joseph Kingsbury and other Wild Yankees from Ulster agreed to punish anyone in their settlement who cooperated with the state by barring them from their homes and refusing to "oblige them

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<sup>34</sup> Deposition of Thomas Smiley, July 15, 1801, in Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 45-46; Document no. 1 attached to a letter from Samuel Hodgdon and James Stewart to Pennsylvania Landholders Committee, November 26, 1801, Records of the Pennsylvania Landholders.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas Cooper to Robert Rose, July 2, 1803, CCP 2:31.

with the least thing to support life." Kingsbury felt that the community ought to treat those who relinquished their Connecticut deeds "as traitors unworthy to live among full blooded Yankees." Along the frontier, where cooperation and mutuality between settlers was crucial to survival, such ostracism constituted a serious punishment. Thomas Smiley testified to the effectiveness of these tactics when he informed Samuel Hodgdon that one or two settlers besides himself desired to purchase Pennsylvania titles but "dare not for the mob."<sup>36</sup>

Neighborhood-level conflicts that pitted Yankees against Yankees increasingly set the tone of disturbances in the backcountry. On one occasion, George Welles, a native of Glastonbury, Connecticut, "was obliged [to] make his escape for his safety" from Athens when his work for the powerful Pennsylvania claimant Charles Carroll brought him into open conflict with his neighbors. Zephon Flower, another Athens resident, became a target of Wild Yankees when he abandoned his Connecticut rights and began working for the Landholders' Association as a surveyor. Settlers cut off the mane and tail of Flower's horse, threatened him with violence, and shot at him from ambush. Likewise, community censure and agrarian violence blended together along Wyalusing Creek. Here, a Yankee inhabitant who offered to work for Pennsylvania surveyor Jason Torrey was threatened with death by several of his neighbors. Again, local sentiment prevailed and the settler declined to help Torrey.<sup>37</sup>

As resistance retreated into backwoods communities, so did conflict. By taking a defensive posture, Wild Yankees relinquished the initiative to their opponents. Soon

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<sup>36</sup> Joseph Kingsbury to John Jenkins, June 28, 1801, *SCP* 11:96; Thomas Smiley to Samuel Hodgdon, July 16, 1801, *Ibid.*, 130. For a discussion of the importance of neighborliness along the frontier, see Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men and the Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement on the Maine Frontier, 1760-1820* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1990), 82-85.

<sup>37</sup> Extract of a Letter from Wayne County, CCP 1:76; Heverly, *Pioneer and Patriot Families*, 2:22; Murray, *History of Old Tioga*, 419; Jason Torrey to Edward Tilghman, April 20, 1803, Torrey Papers.

surveyors, land agents, and officials criss-crossed the northeast frontier looking for opportunities to undermine settler insurgency. Thus, the localization of Yankee resistance placed a greater burden upon settler solidarity as it enabled Pennsylvania and its land claimants to focus more and more pressure on settler communities. As a result, backwoods neighborhoods frequently became the scene of intense struggles over individual loyalty and community allegiance.

Yankee settlements along Sugar Creek faced the same internal conflicts that threatened settler unity across the frontier. By the summer of 1804, Wild Yankees along the creek had to keep a sharp look out for the surveyors, sheriffs' deputies, and land agents who formed the vanguard of Pennsylvania's drive to impose its authority over the land. On more than one occasion, the creek's settlers had chased off such men. For example, Henry Donnell, a Lycoming County magistrate who also worked for the Landholder's Association, traveled the country west of the Susquehanna River cajoling Connecticut claimants into purchasing Pennsylvania titles and bringing ejectment suits against those who refused. Responding to this threat, Sugar Creek's Wild Yankees rallied, captured Donnell, submitted him to a gauntlet of verbal and physical abuse before expelling him from their settlements. Following this episode, the creek's inhabitants held a meeting at which they declared that a "perfect union" existed among them and that they would stand together in defense of their families and farms. Only time would tell if this claim to solidarity would prove genuine.<sup>38</sup>

Robert Rose recognized that settler resistance depended upon community consensus--what Sugar Creek's inhabitants referred to as their "perfect union"--and labored to penetrate the backcountry's thick web of personal loyalties, hoping to spread

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<sup>38</sup> Nathaniel Allen to John Jenkins, June 25, 1804, in Murray, *History of Old Tioga*, 420-421.

dissension among Yankee settlers. Rose's skill in undermining settler unity goes a long way toward explaining his success as an agent of the Landholders' Association. Through his adroit handling of face-to-face encounters and a keen understanding of the interpersonal relationship that structured life in the backcountry, Rose compromised resistance in several Yankee settlements.

In July 1803, Rose made his way to Sugar Creek, primed and ready to confront the same settlers who had so roughly handled Henry Donnell. Rose intended to visit every inhabitant on the creek, for he knew that the only way to conquer the northeast frontier's most notorious band of Wild Yankees was to break it down one settler at a time. The inhabitants of Sugar Creek recognized the threat posed by Rose's visit and took steps to counter it. Instead of being allowed to freely wander among settlers promoting accommodation with the state, a leading Yankee insurgent, Nathaniel Allen, intercepted Rose and escorted him to a general meeting of the creek's inhabitants. Rose noted that "this manner of seeing the settlers was what I had not wished." He rightly felt that it would be more difficult to influence settlers in public than in private. Indeed, Connecticut claimants would not be likely to entertain ideas of accommodation in front of neighbors who might make reprisals.

A master of personal politics and face-to-face negotiations, Rose made the best of his meeting with Sugar Creek's inhabitants and, in the end, succeeded in "sowing dissension among them." He attended the settlers' meeting and, through the force of his personality, transformed the gathering from a resistance rally into a forum for his own subtle methods of persuasion. During the meeting, Rose did little more than bear witness to settlers' declarations of loyalty to their fellow Connecticut claimants and their expressions of disdain for Pennsylvania. Indeed, Rose did not set about his task of dividing settlers' loyalties until after the meeting had ended. As the assembly broke up, Rose mingled with the settlers and "laughed & talked to them in their own style." He even jested about the Wild Yankees' blood-thirsty reputation, telling his audience that the Landholders'

Association chose him as their agent because he was "something of an Indian" himself and would not "be alarmed if he found them [the Yankees] dressed in leggins & breechcloths." Less than an hour after hearing Sugar Creek's inhabitants assert their determination to resist Pennsylvania and its land claimants, Rose found himself shaking their hands.

Rose succeeded in undermining Yankee resistance by convincing backcountry inhabitants that they could best secure their land and livelihood by siding with Pennsylvania; thus, he subdued settler dissent by persuading them that agrarian insurgency was incompatible with their desire for property and independence. During his meeting with Sugar Creek's inhabitants, Rose explained that the Landholders' Association was willing to let Yankees purchase their lands at a "very moderate price," but warned that if they ignored this offer, they "would be ruined by expensive law-suits." Rose's message to settlers was simple: cooperating with the Landholders' Association would give them the best chance of retaining their farms and providing for their families. The night after attending the settlers' meeting, Rose lodged with Connecticut claimant Ezra Goddard. After a long conversation with his host during which he repeated this argument, Rose convinced Goddard to accept a Pennsylvania title for his lands. Still "apprehensive of the violence of his neighbors," Goddard begged Rose to keep his change of heart a close secret. Next, Rose made his pitch to Stephen Ballard, a staunch Wild Yankee and a leading inhabitant of Sugar Creek who once claimed he would "lose the last drop of his blood in the Connecticut cause." Before long, Rose had also convinced Ballard and a few other settlers to relinquish their Connecticut titles. The impact of Rose's efforts were clear even before he left Sugar Creek the following day. When he heard of his neighbors' change of heart, Moses Calkins, another prominent Sugar Creek settler, confronted Stephen Ballard and told him that "he was worse than [Benedict] Arnold & deserved to be

tarred & feathered a thousand times more than Smiley." The "perfect union" that held Sugar Creek on a course of resistance had begun to crack.<sup>39</sup>

Through a combination of threats, the promise of secure titles on easy terms, and an appeal to self-interest, Rose convinced settlers to give up their Connecticut deeds and, in so doing, replaced consensus with conflict along Sugar Creek. Soon after Rose's visit, thirty Sugar Creek settlers offered to relinquish their Connecticut deeds in favor of state titles. This development caused the creek's remaining Wild Yankees to respond with a declaration of their own: Rose received a angry letter signed by fifty-seven settlers accusing him of attempting to destroy the unity that had bound them together "like a band of brothers." Rose was hardly taken aback by the accusation; in fact, he was happy to see that his efforts to "divide and govern" Sugar Creek's Yankee insurgents had been so successful. Rose noted that before his visit to the creek, every settler along its waters would have signed the letter attacking his character. Now, he observed that only about half the settlement's inhabitants had attached their names to the protest.<sup>40</sup>

In his report to the Landholders' executive committee, Robert Rose proudly stated that his plan to divide Sugar Creek's settlers had met with success and that Connecticut claimants who had once prided themselves on their solidarity now viewed each other with suspicion. Later, he commented that each settler was "averse to an action being brought against himself" by the Landholders' Association but had "no objection to its being brought against his neighbors." This statement cut to the heart of the relationship between local unity and agrarian insurgency. Whenever and wherever Yankees turned their backs on their neighbors, opposition to the state declined. Without trust there was no unity; without unity there could be no effective resistance.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, July 21, 1803, CCP 2:38-40.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, July 28, 1803, CCP 2:40; Timothy Beach and Others to Robert Rose, August 1, 1803, *Ibid.*, 43; Rose to Hodgdon, August 11, 1803, *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, July 28, 1803, CCP 2:40; Rose to Hodgdon, August 4, 1804, *Ibid.*, 97.



### Resistance Culture

In their confrontations with surveyors, state officials, and land agents, Wild Yankees forged a culture of resistance. Insurgency and daily life became so closely intertwined that, at times, one became indistinguishable from the other. This was true not just along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier but in other regions where property disputes, frontier isolation, and a sense of alienation from mainstream society encouraged backcountry settlers to create a world view that justified their struggle against grasping speculators or overbearing government officials. Wild Yankee resistance culture was a hodgepodge of values, precedents, and beliefs drawn from European traditions of popular protest, America's revolutionary heritage, the realities of frontier life, evangelical Christianity, and backcountry localism.<sup>42</sup>

Backcountry resistance found its roots in European traditions of popular protest and festive misrule. Mummary, street theater, mocking rhymes--all common features of European festivals--offered common people a way to critique their social superiors, temporarily undermine bonds of deference, and defy government authority. In early modern Europe, a fine line separated festival misrule from popular protest: on many occasions public holidays became occasions for riots and unrest. This heritage provided frontier settlers with a rich language of protest imagery and ritual. Like European rioters, backcountry insurgents blacked their faces and donned elaborate disguises to hide their identities from the authorities and--in the role-shifting tradition of European mummary--to transform themselves from farmers into agrarian rebels. The Old World precedents of

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<sup>42</sup> Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men*, 90-93, 96-100; Edward Countrymen, "'Out of the Bounds of the Law': Northern Land Rioters in the Eighteenth Century" in Alfred F. Young, ed., *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Univ. Press, 1976), 51.

agrarian resistance can be seen in many acts of Wild Yankee insurgency, including the attack on Bartlet Hinds. The riot took place at Christmas, a traditional season of misrule, and contained several common elements of protest ritual, such as the consumption of alcohol and the burning of effigies.<sup>43</sup>

The links between agrarian rebellion in America and popular protest in Europe went far deeper than parallel rituals. Both forms of unrest drew meaning from the concept of a moral economy: a system of human relationships in which communal needs, justice, and equity were upheld over formal legal procedure and individual gain. Settlers around Tioga Point demonstrated this ideological continuity in 1789 when, after a season of poor harvests and hunger, they forcibly confiscated grain from merchants who took advantage of shortages by charging higher prices. Thus, on this occasion, Yankee settlers took part in a type of disturbance that would have been familiar to generations of European peasants and city dwellers--a food riot. But backcountry inhabitants did not have to fight for food to express their desire to obtain social justice. Their struggle for land and their belief that labor legitimated property rights demonstrated that frontier settlers upheld a modified version of the moral economy.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> For insights into the character of popular protest in early modern Europe, see Buchanan Sharp, "Popular Protest in Seventeenth-Century England," in Barry Reay, ed., *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 271-308; Martin Ingram, "Ridings, Rough Music and Mocking Rhymes in Early Modern England," in *Ibid.*, 166-197; and Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Reasons of Misrule: Youth Groups and Charivaris in Sixteenth-Century France" *Past & Present*, 50 (February 1971): 41-75. For an exploration of the links between European popular protest and backcountry unrest in America, see Paul B. Moyer, "A Riot of Devils: Indian Imagery and Popular Protest in the Northeastern Backcountry, 1760-1845" (MA thesis, College of William & Mary, 1994), 10-18.

<sup>44</sup> Dorothy Fennel, "From Rebelliousness to Insurrection: A Social History of the Whiskey Rebellion, 1765-1802" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Pittsburgh, 1981), 98-101; Moyer, "Riot of Devils," 18-31; Samuel Wallis to Henry Drinker, July 12 & September 12, 1789, quoted in Peter Mancall, *Valley of Opportunity: Economic Culture Along the Upper Susquehanna, 1700-1800* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991), 172; Barbara Clark Smith, "Food Rioters and the American Revolution" *William & Mary Quarterly* 51 (January,

Of course, backcountry inhabitants did not have to look back to their European roots to formulate protest: the American Revolution, an event fixed in the memory of many settlers, furnished agrarian rebels with a wealth of ideas and precedents they used to promote resistance. The Revolution legitimated many forms of popular protest: mobbing, effigy burning, and disguise were all employed by Patriots to undermine imperial authority and intimidate Tories. More important, it sanctioned common people to rise up against injustice and oppression. The relationship between the Revolution and popular culture was reciprocal: the independence movement used the rituals of popular protest to mobilize people against Britain; in turn, ordinary Americans used revolutionary motifs to structure and legitimize uprisings against authority. This was especially true in the backcountry: Massachusetts' Shaysites, Pennsylvania's Whiskey rebels, and Maine's Liberty Men all summoned popular understandings of the Revolution to inspire rebellion.<sup>45</sup>

The revolutionary institution that gained the most currency among disgruntled backcountry settlers was that of the militia. Traditionally, the militia had represented local, community-controlled military power. During the Revolution, it continued to play this role as well as engaging in radical politics and the suppression of local opposition to Whig authorities. Agrarian rebels embraced this image and formed themselves into armed militias. They did so not only to provide themselves with an effective instrument of protection and coercion, but to legitimize their actions by evoking the Patriot struggle against Britain. During the 1780s, Wild Yankees formed themselves into a paramilitary force with John Franklin at their head. Again, in the summer of 1801, Wild Yankees held "Military election" near Wyalusing Creek and "organized themselves for defense, constituting their officers from the General of Commander in Chief to the lowest rank."

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1994): 3-38.

<sup>45</sup> Moyer, "A Riot of Devils," 32-41; Peter Shaw, *American Patriots and the Rituals of Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1981), 204-220; Dirk Hoerder, "Boston Leaders and Boston Crowds, 1765-1776," in Young, ed. *The American Revolution*, 235-241.

On this occasion, Ezekiel Hyde was elected colonel. This militia, like its revolutionary predecessors, protected their communities from outside threats and purged them of internal dissent.<sup>46</sup>

The behavior of Wild Yankees reflects the degree to which the Revolution informed their struggle against Pennsylvania. The settlers who attacked Thomas Smiley in 1801 acted in ways that would have been familiar to Patriot mobs during the 1760s and 1770s. Smiley's assailants forced him to turn over all the relinquishments he had collected then made him burn them. This process was commonly followed by revolutionary rioters in their confrontations with Tories, customs officials, and stamp agents: patriot mobs had their victims symbolically renounce their loyalty Britain by forcing them to destroy official documents or to make a public apology. Moreover, like the settlers who assaulted Smiley, revolutionary crowds also punished their victims by covering them in tar and feathers. Yankee insurgents evoked the Revolution not only through action but words. In a petition sent to the Pennsylvania legislature, Connecticut claimants complained about the immoral activities of agents employed by the Landholders' Association, referring to them as "Pimps, Spies, tidewaiters, and Informers." This language was steeped in the memory of America's battle against Britain's commercial policies during the early stages of the Revolution. In particular, that Wild Yankees referred to Association agents as "tidewaiters" shows that they drew a parallel between their opponents and the imperial officials and customs agents who had sought to oppress the colonies with the Stamp Act and other economic regulations.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Dorothy Fennell, "From Rebelliousness to Insurrection," 114-115; Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men*, 112-14; Jason Torrey to Henry Drinker, July 27, 1801, Torrey Papers.

<sup>47</sup> For a description of the assault on Smiley see Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 46; Memorial of the Susquehannah Company to the Pennsylvania Legislature, *SCP* 11:364-365. For a discussion of mob behavior during the Revolution see Hoerder, "Boston Leaders and Boston Crowds," 233-272; Alfred F. Young, "English Plebeian Culture and Eighteenth-Century American Radicalism," in Margaret and James Jacob, ed., *The Origins of Anglo-American Radicalism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984),

Beyond age-old traditions of popular protest and the memory of the American Revolution, the realities of life along the frontier had a significant impact on the character of agrarian insurgency. Rebellious backcountry inhabitants may have understood the language of popular and revolutionary protest, but they developed a dialect of resistance unique to their own experience. Unlike popular upheavals in densely-populated urban areas--which were intermittently sparked by anything from the impressment of sailors to the high prices for bread--agrarian insurgents embarked on long-term opposition movements centered around issues concerning land ownership and local autonomy.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, backcountry rebels were more likely to use premeditated, deadly force than rural or urban rioters. One reason for this is that frontier culture promoted the use of guns not only as an important tool of survival but as a measure of a man's individual worth.<sup>49</sup>

Nothing better illustrates how the experience of frontier life shaped agrarian unrest than the fact that backcountry insurgents across America chose to wear Indian disguises. The Wild Yankees who kidnapped Timothy Pickering in 1788 blacked their faces, tied handkerchiefs around their heads, and wrapped themselves in blankets in order to appear as "Indians." Likewise, Yankee insurgents from around Sugar Creek disguised themselves as Indians when they patrolled the borders of their settlements to keep out Pennsylvania surveyors and land agents. Such behavior was not limited to Pennsylvania's northeast frontier. Vermont's Green Mountain Boys disguised themselves as Indians in order to intimidate settlers, speculators, and officials from New York. Likewise, Maine's Liberty

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<sup>48</sup> Countryman, "'Out of the Bounds of the Law'," 40-44; Thomas P. Slaughter, "Crowds in Eighteenth-Century America: Reflections and New Directions," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History & Biography* 105 (January 1991): 13-14.

<sup>49</sup> Gregory T. Knouff, "The Common People's Revolution: Class, Race, Masculinity, and Locale in Pennsylvania, 1775-1783," (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers Univ, 1996), 31-32, 65-69, 414-415.

Men donned blankets and other elements of an Indian disguise when they assaulted sheriffs' deputies and proprietary agents; their native personae were so elaborate that they later became known as White Indians. Backcountry inhabitants used Indian imagery not only to hide their identities but to strike fear into their enemies. Frontier settlers who had once lived under the threat of Indian attacks usurped the image of the Indian and turned into an effective terror tactic. Land agents and surveyors who ventured into the backcountry feared that people who looked like Indians might be as savage as Indians. As it turned out, their fears were not groundless. In Pennsylvania, Edward Gobin was shot and killed by Wild Yankees disguised as Indians; in New York and Maine, people were also killed by agrarian insurgents dressed in native garb.<sup>50</sup>

The culture of resistance that emerged along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier also drew substance from localism. In many ways, early modern popular culture was local culture. It was sensitive to constructs of community, depended upon oral instead of written communication, and was intimately linked to daily life. The traditions of popular protest that underlay agrarian insurgency fit comfortably within the parochial world view of backcountry inhabitants for they both grew out of the same context: face-to-face contacts and local community life. Moreover, localism spoke to the ethos of agrarian independence that inspired resistance across the American backcountry. This vision of the good life was a localist vision: it upheld local autonomy and the primacy of face-to-face relationships

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<sup>50</sup> Moyer, "A Riot of Devils," 18-31; Proclamation of Governor Thomas McKean, *The Luzerne County Federalist*, October 27, 1804; Michael Bellesiles, *Revolutionary Outlaws: Ethan Allen and the Struggle for Independence on the Early American Frontier* (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1993), 91; Alan Taylor, "Agrarian Independence: Northern Land Rioters after the Revolution," in Alfred F. Young, ed., *Beyond the American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Univ. Press, 1993), 222-223. For an account of the murder of Paul Chadwick by Maine's White Indians, see Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men*, 199-205.

among kin and neighbors. Indeed, the localism of backcountry inhabitants contributed to their ability to construct effective cultures of resistance.<sup>51</sup>

The ties between backcountry localism, popular culture, and insurgency are revealed in a Wild Yankee song composed by settlers from the town of Auburn. The tune reminded Connecticut claimants that they fought for “A cause where all our substance lies” and declared that if Yankees “firm together stand” they would “keep possession of our lands.” Again, land and subsistence--two elements that were central to the realization of agrarian independence--remained key issues to Yankee insurgents. Later on, the song warned that Yankees, rather than break their “Constitution,” would “rise in revolution.” The revolution spoken of here was not a political upheaval--like the one that led to the creation of the United States--but a popular revolution in which local autonomy was upheld over government authority and in which yeoman farmers triumphed over landlords, merchants, and lawyers.<sup>52</sup>

Agrarian insurgents also tapped into powerful religious currents sweeping the backcountry. In particular, settlers who faced the hardships of frontier life, clashed with powerful speculators, and challenged government authority found comfort and justification in evangelical Christianity. Baptists, Freewill Baptists, Methodists, Universalists, and other evangelical sects blossomed in an atmosphere of religious freedom that took hold after the Revolution, especially along the frontier. These denominations offered settlers theologies that harmonized with life on the frontier and promoted highly emotional forms of worship that provided them a respite from their day-to-day struggles. Evangelical religion imbued its adherents with a sense of self worth and furnished them

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<sup>51</sup> For a discussion of the relationship between popular culture and backcountry localism see Saul Cornell, “Aristocracy Assailed: The Ideology of Backcountry Anti-Federalism,” *Journal of American History* 76 (March 1990): 1148-1172, especially pgs. 1165-1167. Another work that has framed my understanding of popular-local culture is Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1978).

<sup>52</sup> “A New Yankee Song,” *The Luzerne County Federalist*, August 20, 1803.

with a religiously-inspired critique of wealth and authority. This latter feature was of great importance to backcountry settlers who found themselves embroiled in land disputes with well-connected gentlemen. Agrarian rebels justified their fight against formal authority by claiming they obeyed a higher, spiritual law. Several post-revolutionary denominations also promoted a belief in the supernatural. This facet of evangelical Christianity also appealed to hard-pressed backcountry inhabitants who looked for any means--magical or otherwise--to gain control over their lives.<sup>53</sup>

The relationship between evangelical Christianity and settler unrest was apparent along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier. For instance, during the 1780s, a leading proponent of Yankee resistance was James Finn, a Connecticut claimant and the minister of Pittston's Baptist congregation. Wild Yankees expressed their religious sensibilities in public declarations and personal correspondence. In 1793 Yankee settler Samuel Baker wrote a scathing letter to Pennsylvania landholder James Strawbridge in which he observed that Strawbridge might "Escape punishment by the Law of men" but would be surely brought to justice by "the Law of God" for his crimes against Connecticut claimants. On another occasion, an anonymous Yankee author who styled himself the "Luzerne Lay Preacher" asserted that the only way to account for the behavior of the Landholders' Association was to blame it on the influence of the "arch deceiver" Satan.<sup>54</sup> Likewise, Sugar Creek's settlers couched their support of the Connecticut claim in religious terms. They declared that the titles to their lands were "derived and can be regularly traced from the Great

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<sup>53</sup> Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men*, 128-129, 134-136, 139-143; John H. Wigger, "Taking Heaven by Storm: Enthusiasm and Early American Methodism, 1770-1820" *Journal of the Early Republic* 14 (Summer 1994): 167-194; Nathan O. Hatch, "In Pursuit of Religious Freedom: Church, State, and People in the New Republic," in Jack P. Green, ed., *The American Revolution: Its Character and Limits* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1987), 389-394.

<sup>54</sup> Stewart Pearce, *Annals of Luzerne County* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1866), 300-301; Samuel Baker to James Strawbridge, 1793, James Strawbridge Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; The "Luzerne Lay Preacher", no. 2, *The Luzerne County Federalist*, March 23, 1805.



Proprietor and Master of the Universe” and that Pennsylvania had no better claim to the land than “Satan had to the kingdom of the Earth.” Wild Yankees, like their rebellious brethren across the backcountry, believed that their resistance was part of a larger cosmic battle between good and evil. This point of view was not limited to the rank and file; even John Jenkins felt that if worse came to worst, God would vindicate their soil rights through a “Supernatural Interference.”<sup>55</sup>

Insurgents across the American backcountry fashioned resistance cultures, but these constructs varied in strength according to the degree of autonomy and alienation experienced by settlers. For example, Maine’s White Indians developed a culture of resistance that was far more elaborate and potent than the one expressed by Wild Yankees. These backcountry insurgents took the use of Indian disguise to a new level. Instead of merely wrapping themselves in blankets and blacking their faces, White Indians donned colorful costumes, wore hideous masks, spoke in a guttural “Indian” fashion, and claimed allegiance to a mystical Indian king. Maine’s agrarian rebels--who earlier called themselves “Liberty Men”--also tapped into popular understandings of the Revolution far more than did Wild Yankees. They proclaimed their determination to secure their rights as citizens of an egalitarian republic by naming their settlements “Liberty” and “Freetown.” More important, Maine’s agrarian rebels formed themselves into a highly organized militia that effectively shielded their settlements from intruding surveyors and state authorities through a system of patrols and pre-arranged signals. Finally, White Indians developed powerful ties between resistance and evangelical religion. Indeed, frontier mystics and

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<sup>55</sup> Proceedings of a settlers meeting held at Sugar Creek on August 10, 1803, *The Luzerne County Federalist*, August 20, 1803; John Jenkins to Noah Murray, March 21, 1802, *SCP* 11:304-305.

radical religious “seekers” played a prominent role mobilizing settler resistance in Maine.<sup>56</sup>

Several reasons account for the differences between the resistance cultures of Maine’s White Indians and Pennsylvania’s Wild Yankees. First, White Indian insurgency peaked in 1807-08 when landlords decided to embark on a legal offensive against squatters at the same time that the Maine backcountry was hit with an economic crisis brought on by President Jefferson’s embargo of foreign trade. During these years, the income of Maine’s backcountry inhabitants plummeted as prices for grain, livestock, lumber, and potash fell. Unable to pay proprietary land fees during the best of times, Maine’s hard-pressed settlers violently resisted ejectment rather than lose their farms.<sup>57</sup> In contrast, Wild Yankee resistance climaxed between 1795 and 1805, a decade of relative economic stability. Settlers along the Pennsylvania frontier were not wealthy but they could at least expect their farm produce to find a market. In this atmosphere, many Yankees decided that paying for their land was less risky than fighting for it. Furthermore, most White Indians came to the frontier as squatters who had no intention of paying speculators for their lands. In comparison, many Wild Yankees came to northeast Pennsylvania as settlers under the Connecticut claim and thus were not innately opposed to the idea of paying land developers for land. Finally, the peak of agrarian resistance in Maine coincided with an evangelical revival that promoted settlers’ sense of alienation from mainstream society. In contrast, the rise of evangelical religion along the northeast frontier developed a far more complex relationship with agrarian unrest.

Even with the most developed culture of resistance, backcountry insurgents could not hold off surveyors, land agents, and powerful speculators if the legal, economic, and

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<sup>56</sup> Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men*, 96, 183-190; Alan Taylor “‘Stopping the Progress of Rogues and Deceivers’: A White Indian Recruiting Notice of 1808,” *William & Mary Quarterly* 42 (January 1985): 93-94.

<sup>57</sup> Taylor, *Liberty Men*, 183.

political factors surrounding their insurgency were not in their favor. Indeed, in many ways, the emergence of a strong culture of resistance among settlers signified that these more tangible aspects of the struggle for property and power had already shifted against them. Such was the case along the Pennsylvania frontier: Wild Yankee resistance became more strident and ritualized as the challenge to settlers' property rights grew. Most threatening, the very foundations of resistance culture--settler unity and community consensus--were increasingly under attack after 1800.

In November 1804, James Ralston finally took steps to enforce the Intrusion Act in the heartland of Wild Yankee resistance: Sugar Creek. He issued warrants against forty-six settlers and sent constable Howard Spalding to serve them. Instead of resisting Spalding, all but three of Sugar Creek's Wild Yankees fled into the hills. Only Phineas Pierce, Michael Bird, and John Barber opposed his arrival. The three pointed their guns at the constable's chest and warned that they would shoot him before they would be taken. Pierce and Bird later repented for their actions and offered to pay for state titles. Many of the settlers who had run off followed suit and surrendered themselves to state authorities. Only John Barber, who was suspected of having taken a hand in the shooting of Edward Gobin, remained defiant.<sup>58</sup>

The encounter between Constable Spalding and Sugar Creek's Wild Yankees marked the decline of settler resistance. In the 1780s or 1790s, a lone constable who entered a Yankee neighborhood to serve warrants would have been mobbed, tarred-and-feathered, or worse. By 1804, Yankee resistance had ebbed. Through a combination of compromise and force, state officials and the Landholders' Association subdued the backcountry's unruly inhabitants. Ultimately, even the most stubborn Wild Yankees came to see that the only

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<sup>58</sup> James Ralston to Thomas McKean, November 17, 1804, CCP 2:104; Affidavit of Howard Spalding, Constable, November 7, 1804, *Ibid.*, 104.

hope they had of retaining their property was to make the best terms they could with the Pennsylvania landholders. In the end, Sugar Creek's settlers agreed to pay Pennsylvania claimants the value of their lands in a state of nature or to quit their farms if they were paid for their improvements. With this breakthrough, Robert Rose asserted that "the Connecticut claim may now be said to be perfectly abandoned."<sup>59</sup>

As the United States entered the nineteenth century, localism remained a force among the inhabitants of the northeast frontier but could no longer serve as an effective framework for agrarian insurgency. Settlers steeped in a localist world view had difficulty reconciling resistance with divisions that were emerging within their neighborhoods. After the turn of the century, contention between Pennsylvanians and Connecticut claimants was joined by struggles between Connecticut claimants who possessed different values, different readings of the Revolution, and different economic outlooks. Wild Yankees found that to defend their property and autonomy they had to shield their settlements from invading surveyors and land agents while battling pro-Pennsylvania factions within their communities. Hard pressed by Pennsylvania and its landowners and faced with growing internal conflict, many Yankees decided that to save their farms and their way of life they had to exchange resistance for reconciliation. At the center of this struggle stood a handful of prominent Yankee settlers who balanced their roles as community leaders against their interests as backcountry entrepreneurs.

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<sup>59</sup> James Ralston to Thomas McKean, November 17, 1804, CCP 2:104; Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, November 28, 1804, *Ibid.*, 106.

## CHAPTER VII THE POLITICS OF ACCOMMODATION

*Let those dastardly souls who are intimidated by the Intrusion law, or the supplement nexed thereto, creep and cringe to the agents of Pennsylvania land jobbers--abandon their lands, and apply for counterfeit grace where nothing just and equitable is to be granted--such men are not worthy to be called Yankees.--"A Yankee Farmer," October 10, 1801<sup>1</sup>*

Communities across the backcountry commonly contained a few leading settlers who stood above their neighbors in wealth and social prestige.<sup>2</sup> One such man was Bartlett Hinds. Hinds, who often went by the title "Captain," was no ordinary frontier settler. A native of Middleboro, Massachusetts, he came to northern Pennsylvania in 1800 to develop lands he claimed under a Delaware Company deed. He did not migrate to the frontier alone but brought his family and half-a-dozen other households with him. Through his land claims and adept recruitment of settlers, Hinds set himself up as the chief inhabitant and founding father of a growing backcountry settlement known as Manor. In keeping with his position as a community leader and honored revolutionary war veteran,

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<sup>1</sup> *The Luzerne County Federalist*, October 10, 1801, Robert J. Taylor, ed., *The Susquehanna Company Papers*, 11 vols. (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1962-1971), 11:212-213 (hereafter cited as SCP).

<sup>2</sup> Emily C. Blackman, *History of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, 1873), 289. For the experiences of leading men elsewhere on the American frontier see Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men and the Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement of the Maine Frontier, 1760-1820* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1990), 155-177; and idem., "Agrarian Independence: Northern Land Rioters After the Revolution," in Alfred F. Young ed., *Beyond the American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Univ. Press, 1993), 229-31.

Captain Hinds organized Manor's Fourth of July celebrations. One year he even orchestrated an ingenious thirteen-gun salute to America's independence. Using a technique practiced by frontiersmen to clear the land, Hinds cut a line of thirteen trees until they were just ready to fall. Then, with the stroke of an ax, he caused the first, "driver," tree to topple which, in turn, caused the other trees to fall with a thundering crash that resembled "the roar of cannon."<sup>3</sup>

Leading men like Hinds played a pivotal role in backcountry disputes over land and authority. Along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier, some prominent settlers promoted accommodation with Pennsylvania and its landholders while others remained committed to resistance. Hinds and others like him charted a third course: they appeared as supporters of resistance when among settlers but presented themselves as proponents of accommodation to Pennsylvania. In June 1801, Hinds delivered a petition to Pennsylvania Governor Thomas McKean, signed by thirty Wyalusing settlers who proclaimed their loyalty to the laws of Pennsylvania. Upon returning to his backcountry home, however, Hinds spread untruths about his meeting with the governor. He claimed that McKean doubted the legitimacy of many Pennsylvania claimants' titles and advised settlers not to purchase land from the Landholders' Association. Ultimately, it was this sort of double-dealing that led to the severe drubbing Hinds received from Yankee insurgents in December 1803.<sup>4</sup>

Besides highlighting how interpersonal disputes continued to frame agrarian unrest in northeast Pennsylvania, Hinds's violent confrontation with Usher's Wild Yankees reflects deeper tensions between localism and an emerging language of class in agrarian America. During his ordeal, Hinds gave a Masonic hand signal, hoping that a fellow member of the

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<sup>3</sup> Blackman, *History of Susquehannah County*, 287-289. For an example of how Hind's tree-felling stunt was used by settlers to clear land, see Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men*, 64.

<sup>4</sup> Henry Drinker to Tench Coxe, August 20, 1801, Henry Drinker Papers, Letterbook, 1786-1790; Henry Drinker to John Tyler, June 9, 1801, *Ibid.*; Extract of a Letter from Wayne County, CCP 1:76.

fraternity would come to his aid. One man, who was apparently a Freemason, did attempt to help Hinds but was forced back by the mob. Thus, in addition to his wealth and social standing, Hinds' membership in an exclusive secret society divided him from ordinary settlers. Indeed, Masonic membership was becoming increasingly frequent among men who sought social distinction and who were willing to look beyond their communities to find it. In one sense, Hinds became a victim of agrarian violence because he transgressed what settlers considered his duties as a leading man.<sup>5</sup>

After 1800, settler insurgency returned in many respects to the localism that had informed agrarian conflict in the region during the First and Second Pennamite-Yankee Wars. But such parochialism ultimately failed as a framework for resistance. The reasons for this lay in the ways that economic and social change altered the face of local culture in the Pennsylvania backcountry. By the turn of the century, northeast Pennsylvania was beginning to shed its character as a raw frontier and start down the road to becoming a market-connected agricultural hinterland. This process of improvement promoted the emergence of a class of leading men. The position of these prominent settlers was not always easy: leading men across the American backcountry found themselves uncomfortably perched between their identity as community leaders and their interests as backcountry entrepreneurs. The northeast frontier's chief inhabitants found that they had to make hard choices between community and self interest as Pennsylvania and its landholders forced them and their more humble neighbors to decide between resistance or accommodation.

### **Resistance & Accommodation**

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<sup>5</sup> Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 47; Stephen C. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730-1840* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1966), 184-185, 207-208; Alan Taylor, *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 210-213.

The decline of the Susquehannah and Delaware companies and the defection of non-resident speculators from the Connecticut claim led to the localization of Wild Yankee resistance. This resurgent localism led to the fragmentation of resistance, with individual Yankee settlements pursuing different strategies of resistance and accommodation independent of Connecticut land companies or each other. However, even in the midst of this confusion, it is possible to discern patterns of resistance and accommodation and to chart the economic, social, and cultural factors that shaped these patterns.

After 1800, the northeast frontier's Yankee inhabitants began to signal their willingness to discard their Connecticut rights in favor of state titles. For instance, in May 1801, over forty settlers along Towanda Creek agreed to relinquish their Connecticut claims.<sup>6</sup> In the following month, twenty-seven pioneers of the Nine-Partners settlement in Wayne County submitted to the Pennsylvania Landholders, while Abraham Horn collected thirty-four additional relinquishments in a single day.<sup>7</sup> Several Yankee settlements along Tunkhannock Creek made a favorable response to offers to sell them state deeds and moved quickly toward reconciliation with Pennsylvania and its landholders. Here, large numbers of Yankees offered to relinquish their Connecticut claims and purchase state titles. Indeed, of the 116 settlers who agreed to discard their Connecticut deeds by the summer of 1801, nearly half dwelt along Tunkhannock Creek.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Joseph Van Sick to Tench Coxe, May 19, 1801, *SCP* 11:61; List of Connecticut Relinquishments, June-August 1801, *Ibid.*, 193; Abraham Horn to the Landholders' Committee, June 9, 1801, Minutes of the Pennsylvania Landholders' Association, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>7</sup> Ebenezer Bowman to Edward Tilghman, June 30, 1801, *SCP* 11:109; Enclosure accompanying letter from Henry Drinker to Tench Coxe, August 8, 1801, Connecticut Claims Papers, 1:83, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter cited as CCP); John Thacher to Henry Drinker and Samuel Hodgdon, August 26, 1801, *SCP* 11:184; Committee of the Pennsylvania Landholders' to Thomas McKean, Feb, 1804, CCP 2:83.

<sup>8</sup> List of Connecticut Relinquishments, June-August, 1801, *SCP* 11:191-194.



By 1803 the trickle of petitions in favor of accommodation had become a flood. In January Connecticut claimants along the upper reaches of Wyalusing and Wysox creeks agreed to open negotiations with the Pennsylvania Landholders. Robert Rose found the majority of settlers "well disposed, or capable of being made so with a little trouble."<sup>9</sup> Likewise, James Ralston informed the Pennsylvania Landholders that "all kind[s] of opposition" in Wayne County had "completely ceased" and presented them with an offer to buy state titles signed 107 Towanda Creek settlers. In October, Pennsylvania land agent Samuel Baird sold state titles to forty-three out of forty-eight Yankees settled on lands south of Towanda Creek. A month later, inhabitants from Smithfield and Murraysfield forwarded a written declaration expressing their willingness to abandon their Connecticut deeds and repurchase their lands from Pennsylvania.<sup>10</sup> By the year's end, hundreds of Connecticut claimants from dozens of settlements had signed petitions that declared their intention to relinquish their Connecticut rights and obtain Pennsylvania deeds.<sup>11</sup>

But the rapid progress of accommodation often proved to be more illusory than real. Indeed, for every report on the progress of negotiations between Connecticut claimants

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<sup>9</sup> Dimon Bostwick to Ebenezer Bowman, January 30, 1803, CCP 2:8; Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, August 4, 1803, *Ibid.*, 42; Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, August 21, 1803, *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>10</sup> James Ralston to the Landholders' Committee, May 17, 1803, Records of the Pennsylvania Landholders' Association, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Samuel Baird to Thomas Cooper, October 7, 1803, Letters from the Pennsylvania Claimants to the Commissioners, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; George Welles to Governor McKean, November 7, 1803, in Louise Welles Murray, *A History of Old Tioga Point and Early Athens* (Wilkes-Barre: Reader Press, 1907), 368.

<sup>11</sup> For accommodation petitions and lists of Yankee relinquishments see Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, March 7, 1803, CCP 2:17; Petition from Wysox settlers, March 25, 1803, *Ibid.*, 21; List of Towanda settlers willing to purchase, April 30, 1803, *Ibid.*, 25; Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, August 21, 1803, *Ibid.*, 49; Settlers wishing to purchase from Tioga Township, Lycoming Co., July 7, 1803, *Ibid.*, 46; Rose to Hodgdon, July 14, 1803, *Ibid.*, 36; Petition from Wysox settlers, July 29, 1803, *Ibid.*, 44; Petition to purchase from Wysox & Wyalusing settlers, August 1803, *Ibid.*, 53-54; and Rose to Hodgdon, September 10, 1803, *Ibid.*, 57.

and Pennsylvanians, there was another claiming that opposition to the state and the Landholders Association was still alive. In February 1803, settlers along Wyalusing Creek held a meeting at which they stated that they would relinquish their Connecticut deeds and purchase state titles. Yet this event did not mean that resistance ended in this neighborhood. On the contrary, in 1806 Samuel Meredith received word that Wyalusing Creek remained “a hot-bed of opposition to the Pennsylvania Land holders.”<sup>12</sup> Ebenezer Bowman, who served as an agent for several Pennsylvania landholders, also encountered contradictory testimony concerning the mood of Yankee settlers. In May 1803, Bowman heard that Connecticut claimants along Wyalusing and Towanda creeks were ready to turn in their Yankee deeds and “disposed to purchase” their lands from the Landholders Association. But only a few weeks earlier in April, Bowman’s sources had informed him that Yankees were determined to “stand and fall by the Connecticut title” and that settlers “from the forks of the Wyalusing to Tioga point on both sides of the [Susquehanna] river” were “determined not to purchase the Pennsylv<sup>a</sup> title.” Likewise, in the spring of 1803 Wayne County officials reported an end to settler resistance, yet surveyors working for state landholders still encountered resistance in parts of that county the following fall.<sup>13</sup>

Even as the Landholders’ Association received petitions from settlers expressing their willingness to purchase state titles, their agents and surveyors continued to be harassed, beaten, and even killed. Indeed, Wild Yankees discovered that it was easy to sign a pledge of loyalty with one hand and maintain violent resistance with the other. In November

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<sup>12</sup> Connecticut claimants to the Pennsylvania Landholders’ Association, February 23, 1803, *SCP* 11:373; John B. Wallace to Samuel Meredith, December 1, 1806, Meredith Papers, Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

<sup>13</sup> Ebenezer Bowman to Edward Tilghman, May 14, 1803, *SCP* 11:387; Ebenezer Bowman to Edward Tilghman, April 8, 1803, *Ibid.*, 384-385; James Ralston to the Landholders’ Committee, May 17, 1803, Records of the Pennsylvania Landholders; Jason Torrey to Edward Tilghman, October 10, 1804, Jason Torrey Papers, Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania; Samuel Preston to Samuel Meredith, September 26, 1804, *SCP* 11:506-507.

1803, Samuel Hodgdon sent Robert Rose a brace of pistols. After receiving them, Rose explained he did not think he would have "any occasion for them" but had requested the pistols believing that it was "as well to be provided against things that may occur." Clearly, Rose felt that Yankee insurgents still posed a threat to his personal safety; indeed, on at least one occasion, he uncovered a plot to take his life.<sup>14</sup> Rose claimed that any Pennsylvania surveyor working in the neighborhood of Sugar Creek would be violently resisted, even killed, "by persons disguised so as not to be known." On July 27, 1804, Rose's prediction of violence came true when Edward Gobin, a Pennsylvania surveyor, was shot "through the body with a rifle bullet" while visiting the home of Henry Donnell near the Tioga River. The leading suspects in Gobin's murder were eighteen disguised settlers who had been seen lurking in the neighborhood a few days before the shooting.<sup>15</sup> On several other occasions Wild Yankees fired upon state officials and surveyors. In one incident, a bullet narrowly missed a surveyor employed by Robert Rose.<sup>16</sup>

Resistance and negotiation became intertwined along the northeast frontier, making it difficult to divide settlers into categories of resisters and accommodationists. Instead of renouncing resistance once they opened talks with the Landholders' Association, many Yankees continued to use violence and intimidation as a bargaining chip in their negotiations. In turn, negotiation became just another instrument of resistance: many settlements who had no wish to purchase state titles opened talks with Pennsylvania and its landholders in order to forestall ejectment suits. Insurgency increasingly became a sort

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, November 17, 1803, CCP 2:66; Blackman, *History of Susquehanna County*, 23.

<sup>15</sup> Proclamation of Reward for the Perpetrator of the Murder of Edward Gobin, August 11, 1804, George Edward Reed, ed., *Pennsylvania Archives*, 4th ser., 12 vols. (Harrisburg: Wm. Stanley Ray, 1900) 4:535-536; Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, August 11, 1804, CCP 2:98; David Craft, *History of Bradford County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co., 1878), 369.

<sup>16</sup> Blackman, *History of Susquehanna County*, 23; Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, September 17, 1803, CCP 2:58; H.C. Bradsby, *History of Bradford County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: S.B. Nelson & Co., 1891), 448.

of delaying action, with many backcountry inhabitants stalling for time in order to improve their bargaining position. After the turn of the century the goal of resistance was not to maintain the Connecticut claim but to secure the best possible terms for the purchase of a Pennsylvania deed.

It is clear that the localization of agrarian resistance allowed individual settlements to pursue different approaches toward securing their lands. However, it is not always clear why some communities continued to resist long after others had come to terms with Pennsylvania and its landholders. To understand why some settlements were more stubborn than others, it is necessary to explore how frontier development shaped Yankee attitudes toward accommodation.

Three factors helped to determine the balance Yankee settlements struck between resistance and accommodation. One of these was whether or not they fell within Pennsylvania's growing sphere of political and economic influence. Another was the degree of economic development a community had obtained. The final factor was whether or not a settlement had access to commercial markets.

Backcountry neighborhoods closer to longer-settled regions or astride good roads were more apt to take a more positive view of accommodation with the state than isolated settlements on the fringes of the northeast frontier. For example, communities in the Wyoming Valley were willing to settle their disputes with the state for reasons that went beyond the generous terms of the Compromise Act. By 1800 the inhabitants of Wilkes-Barre and the Wyoming Valley had much to lose and little to gain from continuing their support of the Connecticut claim. Not only were their farms at risk, so was their position in the region's developing economic and political infrastructure. By the turn of the century, Wilkes-Barre and its environs had become the core of a productive agricultural hinterland. Grain shipments and other commerce between upstate New York and Baltimore traveled along the Susquehanna River and through Wilkes-Barre. Not only

was the town at the heart of northeast Pennsylvania's commercial and transportation networks, it was also the seat of Luzerne County's government and judicial institutions.<sup>17</sup> That the Wyoming Valley fell within Pennsylvania's political and economic sphere helps to explain why settlements neighboring the valley also quickly made terms with the state. Even though many settlers along Tunkhannock Creek did not enjoy the provisions of the Compromise Act, their proximity to the locus of Pennsylvania's authority in Luzerne County probably made them more ready to negotiate with the Landholders' Association. From a settler's point of view, the effectiveness of the state's coercive powers increased the closer one got to the county courthouse at Wilkes-Barre.

Pennsylvania's sphere of influence spread only as far as roads and rivers would carry it. Indeed, the spirit of accommodation in Yankee settlements was proportional to the quality of the lines of communication that connected them to the world beyond the backcountry. Pennsylvania could not hope to enforce its laws among settlers it could not reach. While traveling along the upper Susquehanna Valley in 1795, Duc de la Rochefoucault-Liancourt described in detail how poor roads made movement slow and treacherous. On one occasion, his party followed a route that led north out of the Wyoming Valley. They soon discovered that this "road" was little more than an eighteen-inch wide footpath that wound around "fallen trees, and led along the edges of a precipice."<sup>18</sup> Yankees in isolated, backwoods communities found that the land itself often provided them with an effective defense against the inroads of Pennsylvania's surveyors, sheriffs, and land agents. Roads of any account did not appear in areas dominated by Wild Yankees until the mid-to-late 1790s. The state authorized the construction of roads between Tioga Point, the town of

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<sup>17</sup> Murray, *History of Old Tioga*, 356; Peter Mancall, *Valley of Opportunity: Economic Culture Along the Upper Susquehanna, 1700-1800* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991), 176-177.

<sup>18</sup> Duc de la Rochefoucault-Liancourt, *Travels Through the United States of North America, The Country of the Iroquois, & Upper Canada in the Years 1795, 1796, 1797*, 2 vols. (London: R. Phillips, 1799), 1:33.

Ulster, Towanda Creek, and Wysox Creek and another running up Wyalusing Creek between 1792 and 1794. Sugar Creek, the center of Yankee resistance, was not effectively linked to the wider world by roads until after the turn of the century.<sup>19</sup>

A settlement's decision to resist or submit was shaped not only by their access to Pennsylvania's economic and political institutions, but by the degree of economic development they had attained. Yankee settlers who possessed productive farms were more likely to open negotiations with Pennsylvania and its landholders than poor subsistence farmers. The level of wealth obtained by backcountry inhabitants was, in turn, determined by the amount of labor they invested in their farms and by the quality of their land.

Settlers who came to northeast Pennsylvania from New England were familiar with the thin soils, hard labor, and slim returns of hill farming; unfortunately, they were also familiar with the poverty that came with farming marginal lands. While passing between Tioga Point and Wilkes-Barre in the late 1790s, Isaac Weld was displeased by the region's rough terrain and shocked to find that many of the families they lodged with had "barely enough" provisions to feed themselves. On one occasion, Weld and his companions left one hungry household and crossed the Susquehanna River only to find that the inhabitants on the opposite bank "were still more destitute." Another traveler journeying through the same territory described the settlers between Wilkes-Barre and Tioga Point as "poor, lazy, drunken, quarrelsome, and extremely negligent in the culture of their lands." This observation was made in an age when poverty was commonly attributed to a person's moral flaws, and serves to illustrate not only the prejudice of the author but the material insecurity experienced by many Yankee settlers.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 249-250.

<sup>20</sup> Isaac Weld, *Travels Through the States of North America and the Provinces of Upper & Lower Canada*, 2 vols. (London: 1807; reprint, New York: Johnson Reprint Company, 1968), 1:343-345, 348; Rochefoucault-Laincourt, *Travels Through the United States*, 1:93.

Connecticut claimants whose lands lay in areas with poor soil, rough terrain, and dense forests were far more likely to maintain resistance to Pennsylvania than their counterparts who were blessed with lands of rich agricultural potential. It is not difficult to understand why a hardscrabble farmer who gained little profit from his land, and had no reason to expect any improvement in the future, would bridle at the thought of paying twice for his property. This assertion is supported by patterns of resistance in the backcountry: poor, hillcountry settlements opposed Pennsylvania long after Connecticut claimants who owned farms on rich, riverside lands had moved toward accommodation. Sugar Creek's Wild Yankees inhabited some of the poorest country along the frontier. An agent working for the Landholders' Association admitted that "much of the land in this Country . . . is not worth five cents an acre." Along Sugar Creek and other tributaries of the Susquehannah and Delaware rivers, tillable land was usually restricted to "a very narrow slip" while land on the hills was "of little value." The fact that many Pennsylvania landholders demanded high prices for such lands made Yankee settlers even more unwilling to pay for state deeds.<sup>21</sup>

In contrast to the frontier's poorest inhabitants, settlers who possessed rich riverside lands and who lived on long-settled, well-improved farms (those who possessed the former usually enjoyed the latter) moved rapidly toward accommodation with the state. Turn-of-the-century descriptions of Wilkes-Barre and the Wyoming Valley paint a picture of improvement and growing prosperity. After traveling the difficult road between Tioga Point and the Wyoming Valley, Isaac Weld was pleased to find that Wilkes-Barre contained about 150 houses, a church, a court house, and a jail. This relative prosperity was based on the valley's rich soil, its access to markets, and the amount of labor its long-settled inhabitants had put into their farms. In 1791 Timothy Pickering described the

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<sup>21</sup> Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, September 10, 1803, *SCP* 11:410; Rose to Hodgdon, July 28, 1803, *Ibid.*, 401.

size and productivity of farms in the Wyoming Valley. He claimed that the average farm in the valley contained three hundred acres of land, about thirty of which were cleared. These improved acres produced just over ninety bushels of mixed grains and one and a half tons of hay. Since between thirty and fifty bushels of grain were needed to support a farming family and its livestock, this would leave forty to sixty bushels which could be exchanged for goods or cash. While settlers along the margins of the northeast frontier lived close to starvation, Connecticut claimants in the Wyoming Valley not only met their basic subsistence needs but produced a marketable surplus. This productive capability gave well-off Yankees the means and the motive to secure their farms under a Pennsylvania deed.<sup>22</sup>

More than cash or the value of an individual's material possessions, wealth along the frontier was based upon the amount of work settlers invested in their farms. Indeed, even land with great agricultural potential was worthless until somebody cleared and improved it. The relative poverty or prosperity of backcountry inhabitants was a factor of labor which was, in turn, a factor of time: a settler who had occupied a tract for five years had more opportunity to improve his farm than a settler who had occupied his land for only five months. Because a settler could clear between five and eight acres of woodland in six months of steady labor, and between twenty and forty acres of improved land were needed to support a family, it is obvious that Yankee settlers had to spend several years laboring on the frontier before they could expect to secure their material needs, let alone produce a marketable surplus that would allow them to repurchase their land from a Pennsylvania landholder. Even Robert Rose had to admit that "the difficulty of clearing the land is so great that some years expire before a man can raise a subsistence for his family from it."

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<sup>22</sup> Weld, *Travels Through the States of North America*, 351; Timothy Pickering to Alexander Hamilton, October 13, 1791, SCP 10:151; Bettye Hobbs Pruitt, "Self-sufficiency and the Agricultural Economy of Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts," *William & Mary Quarterly* 41 (July 1984): 342-345 (hereafter cited as *WMQ*).



The bottom line of this time-labor equation was simple: the longer a Yankee settler worked his farm, the better chance he had of being able to afford a Pennsylvania title, and thus the more likely he was to embrace accommodation.<sup>23</sup>

As with the quality of land, the time-labor factor of agrarian prosperity favored Connecticut claimants in the Wyoming Valley rather than Yankees who lived in newly established backcountry settlements. Again, this explains why many settlers in the southern portions of Luzerne County were willing to purchase Pennsylvania deeds while resistance endured along Sugar Creek and other backcountry settlements near the Pennsylvania-New York border. Yankee pioneers in raw frontier settlements possessed few means for repurchasing their farms from the Pennsylvania landholders, which is why low prices and generous terms of credit were necessary to entice them toward accommodation. Indeed, Robert Rose found that most settlers "expressed their wishes to purchase the Pennsylvania title, if it could be got on reasonable terms." However, the poverty that dogged frontier inhabitants was, for most, a temporary condition rooted in the realities of frontier agriculture. Thus Yankee settlers, even those who remained committed to violent resistance, were not a class of rural proletarians but aspiring yeomen whose only capital was a willingness to devote their time and labor to the creation of profitable farms. Rose recognized their plight, believing that "wild Yankees" were mostly "poor and Ignorant but industrious settlers thinly Scattered over a wild country." Whether they continued to resist or opened negotiations with the Landholders' Association, poor Yankees stalled for time while they improved the productive capabilities of their lands.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> William Wyckoff, *The Developers' Frontier: The Making of the Western New York Landscape* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1988), 157; Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, July 28, 1803, CCP 2:40. For calculations of the amount of improved acres needed to support a family see: Bettye Hobbs Pruitt, "Self-sufficiency and the Agricultural Economy," 342-45 and Christopher M. Jedry, *The World of John Cleaveland: Family and Community in Eighteenth-Century New England* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1979), 63.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, July 10, 1803, CCP 2:36; Thomas Cooper to

Another factor that shaped settlers' decisions to negotiate or resist was their access to commercial markets. Wilkes-Barre and other settlements along the Susquehanna lay astride a growing trade route between upstate New York and Baltimore. Settlers along this corridor knew that any surplus they produced would enjoy ready access to markets.<sup>25</sup> This situation enabled settlers to acquire cash to pay for Pennsylvania titles and involved them more closely Pennsylvania's economic order. In contrast, economic underdevelopment and a lack of market ties remained pronounced in the hillcountry of northern Pennsylvania into the first decade of the nineteenth century. There settlers complained of "the badness of the roads to their farms, & the difficulty of clearing the land, & getting its produce to market." Without access to commercial markets, even those settlers who could produce a surplus lacked the means for turning crops into cash or credit.<sup>26</sup>

Besides increasing settlers' ability to repurchase their lands from the state, participation in commercial markets made Yankees more likely to view cooperation with Pennsylvania in a more positive light. Connecticut claimants who lacked access to markets remained more fully wed to a subsistence culture. This culture upheld values common to the agrarian frontier: the pursuit of household independence, the primacy of local authority, and a tendency to commit economic resources to assure a family's subsistence rather than to take advantage of commercial opportunities. Settlers who perceived the world through the lens of subsistence culture saw state authority as a threat to their status as independence yeomen and viewed Pennsylvania landholders as parasites who sought to profit from the labor of others. In comparison, Connecticut claimants who were involved in market agriculture entered a commercial world in which the law had greater weight than did local custom. Settlers who sold surplus produce to merchants in Wilkes-Barre and

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Thomas McKean, November 15, 1802, *SCP* 11:339.

<sup>25</sup> Mancall, *Valley of Opportunity*, 171, 176, 206-213.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, July 10, 1803, *SCP* 11:395-396.

Tioga Point for shipment down the Susquehanna were more likely to see the purchase of a Pennsylvania deed as a way to secure the profits of their labor than as an obstacle to household autonomy.<sup>27</sup>

The final factor that shaped the landscape of resistance along the frontier is the most elusive: the innumerable interpersonal relationships and local power struggles that framed the lives of backcountry yeomen. A community's decision to submit to, or resist, Pennsylvania was often made not with reference not to the outside world but local concerns. A critical ingredient in this realm of face-to-face relationships was the aims and attitudes of prominent frontier settlers.

### **"artful deceivers"**

In March 1803, Samuel Preston wrote to Henry Drinker concerning the Yankee intruders who occupied his lands in Wayne County. In his report, Preston distinguished between resident proprietors of the Susquehannah and Delaware companies and ordinary settlers. He described the former as "swindlers" and "artful deceivers" who sought to exploit their large interest in the Connecticut claim and the latter as the "ignorant deceived" who, in contrast, only wanted to protect their farms. More significantly, Preston observed that prominent Connecticut claimants used their influence to sustain settler resistance, or to dampen it, in order to protect their investments.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Works that discuss the relationship between subsistence agriculture, market connections, and the outlook of yeomen farmers include: James A. Henretta, "Families and Farms: Mentalité in Pre-Industrial America," *WMQ* 35 (January 1978): 1-32; Michael Merrill, "Cash is Good to Eat: Self-Sufficiency and Exchange in the Rural Economy of the United States," *Radical History Review* 4 (1977): 42-71; and Daniel Vickers, "Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America," *WMQ* 47 (January 1990): 3-29.

<sup>28</sup> Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, March 8, 1803, Henry Drinker Papers, Journal and Land Records, 1789-1809.

After the turn of the century, leading men in communities across the backcountry struggled to reconcile local loyalties and resistance with class and self-interest. On the one hand, prominent settlers owed their influence to the support of their neighbors and were expected to protect community interests. On the other, leading men formed an amorphous class of backcountry entrepreneurs and petty speculators who, at times, went outside their communities to secure profits, power, and legitimacy. These overlapping identities did not always coexist in harmony. This was especially true in the first decade of the nineteenth century when Pennsylvania and hard-pressed Yankee settlers forced many leading men to choose between the two.

The wealth and social status of leading settlers, though modest by metropolitan standards, garnered them considerable influence and respect in backcountry settlements. Many prominent Connecticut claimants were farmers, while others mixed agricultural pursuits with more entrepreneurial ventures, such as milling, land speculation, and store-keeping. Most leading men, though a cut above their neighbors, did not possess the means to set themselves off as a distinct social group. More important, they remained intermeshed in their communities and answerable to their neighbors.<sup>29</sup>

Yankee leading men were wealthier than their neighbors but hardly possessed the economic clout and social prestige mustered by the members of the Pennsylvania Landholders' Association. That many Pennsylvania speculators laid claim to tens of thousands of acres, involved themselves in commerce and manufacturing, and surrounded themselves with the trapping of gentility has already been suggested. Samuel Meredith,

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<sup>29</sup> Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men*, 155-160; Richard M. Brown, "Back Country Rebellions and the Homestead Ethic in America, 1740-1799," in Richard M. Brown and Don E. Fehrenbacher ed., *Tradition, Conflict, and Modernization: Perspectives on the American Revolution* (New York: Academic Press, 1977), 87-91. For insights into the localist orientation of some leading men see Alan Taylor, "'A Kind of Warr': The Contest for Land on the Northeastern Frontier, 1750-1820," *WMQ* 46 (January 1989): 16.

John Nicholson, and Henry Drinker lived in a world of bright carriages, spacious homes, and liveried servants. They constituted a post-revolutionary elite who maintained a dominant position in the economic and political life of the early republic.<sup>30</sup> Backcountry leading men lived a far different existence. Their political connections were limited to those they made as militia officers and local magistrates; the scope of their commercial activities included marketing surplus farm produce, selling off small tracts of land, and operating mills. Instead of carriages, servants, and mansions, most prominent settlers were content with a good horse, a couple of dependable farm hands, and a frame house.

The gap that separated penurious Yankee elites from Pennsylvania's land developers is best illustrated by comparing Delaware Company proprietor Samuel Stanton with Henry Drinker's resident land agent, Samuel Preston. Preston described Stanton as "the best man from Connecticut" in his neighborhood and the only one "not addicted to drunkenness"--high praise from a confirmed Yankee-hater. In 1798 Stanton laid claim to 880 acres of land valued at \$1,530. In comparison, Stanton's neighbors possessed farms between one hundred and five hundred acres. The average holding was a three-hundred-acre farm worth about \$420 dollars. In terms of the size and value of his land holdings, Stanton was head and shoulders above ordinary Yankee settlers. In fact, Stanton's access to the frontier's most valuable resource--land--assured him the status of leading man.<sup>31</sup>

Samuel Stanton may have been influential and upstanding, but his wealth hardly compared to that of Samuel Preston. In 1798 Samuel Preston owned a two-story frame home valued at \$1,220, two hundred acres of land (of which two-thirds were cleared for

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<sup>30</sup> Thomas M. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1987), 21-30. For a discussion of the wealth, influence, and outlook of gentlemen-speculators in Massachusetts see Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men*, 31-60.

<sup>31</sup> Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, May 22, 1799, Drinker Papers, Journal; United States Direct Tax, Pennsylvania, Fifth Division, Wayne County, no. 371.

agriculture), three mills, a number of barns and outbuildings, seven cows, and four oxen. In contrast, Stanton's lands were largely undeveloped and he lived in a frame house worth \$210--about one sixth of the value of Preston's dwelling. While Preston managed numerous commercial ventures and oversaw the development of Stockport, a growing backcountry trade center, Stanton had to struggle to keep his family from starving when they first came to the region. Although knee-deep in land rights, prominent Connecticut claimants like Stanton could easily fall short on the money and labor they needed to clear the land, make improvements, or even assure their families a bare subsistence.<sup>32</sup>

In terms of wealth, many leading Connecticut claimants were not far removed from the average Yankee settler. For example, Jonas Ingham, Minor York, and Elisha Keeler were widely recognized as leading men along Wyalusing Creek. In 1798 the average value of an ordinary settler's home in the neighborhood of the creek was just over \$23. The average per-acre value of their land was about \$1.30. Minor York, a longtime inhabitant, was Wyalusing Creek's most prosperous settler. He possessed a \$200 home, a frame barn, and three hundred acres of land worth \$1,200, or \$4 an acre. Ingham, who arrived in northeast Pennsylvania in 1789, was by no means rich but held the land and resources he needed to move down the path toward rural prosperity. Ingham owned a home valued at \$150, a small log barn, and six hundred acres of land worth \$850--about \$1.45 an acre. At the lowest end of the scale was Elisha Keeler. He lived in a cabin worth only \$20, possessed a crude log barn, and held title to a 350-acre farm valued at about \$1.28 an acre. Keeler, whose property values fell slightly below township averages, probably maintained a standard of living familiar to most settlers.<sup>33</sup>

Raw wealth alone cannot account for the influence and position of leading men. Only a position of authority within an extensive kin network or the status of being a settlement's

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<sup>32</sup> Goodrich, *History of Wayne County*, 188-189, 217; Direct Tax, Wayne County, no. 368:593, 599.

<sup>33</sup> Direct Tax, Luzerne County, nos. 374: 40, 41 and 375:142, 148.

founding father could assure an individual the status of leading man. For example, Samuel Stanton gained much of his influence among his fellow settlers because he was one of the first homesteaders in their neighborhood. Such pioneers were valued not only because of the experience and advice they could offer to later migrants, but because they often grew enough food to help support newcomers through their first difficult years along the frontier. Family was another source of local authority. Samuel Baird touched upon how kin networks contributed to the stature of prominent settlers when he described one of Towanda Creek's chief inhabitants, Gordon Fowler. This Yankee, "from the number of his Sons and Sons in law," he noted was "as formidable as an Eastern Patriarch." Here, Baird highlighted the fact that influence within agrarian communities often rested on family ties--and the labor these ties could mobilize--as much as wealth.<sup>34</sup>

Many of the signs that denoted a person as a leading man are easy to miss if they are examined outside the context of the backcountry. The possession of a barn or other outbuildings, common among farmers in settled regions, was a rare mark of prestige in backwoods regions that testified to an individual's status as a leading man. Most prominent men along Sugar Creek had barns listed in their tax assessments. These buildings were, more often than not, rude log structures, but they signaled that their owners had the means and the ambition to develop their frontier freeholds into valuable farms capable of producing marketable surpluses of crops, fodder, and livestock. Like barns, mills contributed to their proprietors' local prominence. Indeed, two of Sugar Creek's leading men, Luther and Ezra Goddard, owed their status to the mill they owned and operated. As millers, the Goddards turned their neighbors' grain into flour and their

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<sup>34</sup> David W. Maxey, "Of Castles in Stockport and Other Strictures: Samuel Preston's Contentious Agency for Henry Drinker," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History & Biography* 100 (July 1986): 437; Samuel Baird to Thomas Cooper, October 7, 1803, Letters from Pennsylvania Claimants to the Commissioners; Clement F. Heverly, *Pioneer and Patriot Families of Bradford County, Pennsylvania*, 2 vols. (Towanda, PA: Bradford Star Print, 1913), 1:335-339.

trees into lumber; they thus provided a crucial service that made them important figures in their settlement.<sup>35</sup>

The influence of most backcountry leading men extended only as far as the boundaries of their communities; indeed, their status and emerging class identity was embedded within local community life. On more than one occasion, outside observers noted the local influence of leading men only to scoff at their relative poverty and ignorance. For example, Robert Rose once spent a night at the home of prominent Yankee settler Ezra Goddard. Rose, who described his host as "one of the ruder animals in existence," did have to admit that Goddard was "influential & comparatively wealthy" among his neighbors.<sup>36</sup> However boorish Goddard might have been, this did not keep Rose from recognizing his importance or actively courting his support in subduing settler resistance. The local authority of leading settlers placed them at the center of the struggle between Pennsylvania and Wild Yankees.

The local influence of leading men made them key figures in the fight for property and power in northeast Pennsylvania. Prominent Yankee settlers helped to determine whether their communities would cooperate with state officials and the Landholders' Association or continue to resist. A number of factors influenced which way they directed their neighbors. In more mature settlements that were linked to the wider world through roads and commercial markets, leading men usually leaned toward accommodation. In contrast, the chief settlers of poorer, more isolated settlements were less willing to risk the censure of their neighbors and, more often than not, encouraged their communities to resist.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Direct Tax, Luzerne County, no. 375:155-157; Heverly, *Pioneer and Patriot Families*, 266-67.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, July 21, 1803, CCP 2:40.

<sup>37</sup> Alan Taylor, "Agrarian Independence," 229-231.



Samuel Stanton's activities illustrate how leading men swayed their neighbors' opinions, influenced the tempo of resistance, and regulated their communities' response to overtures from the Landholders' Association. According to Samuel Preston, Stanton took "great pains" to dissuade Yankee settlers from purchasing Pennsylvania deeds by spreading rumors about the intentions of the Pennsylvania Landholders. He played on his neighbors' fear of dispossession by telling them that once they relinquished their Connecticut titles and thus stripped themselves of any legal claim to their lands, the landholders would eject them from their farms instead of selling them state deeds. More threatening, Stanton raised the specter of agrarian insurrection by pointing out, according to Preston, "the success of Governor Chittenden & the Allen's in forming the State of Vermont" and asserting that Yankee settlers could accomplish a similar feat "with greater ease."<sup>38</sup>

Stanton was not the only leading man to use his influence to shape the attitudes of settlers. In 1802 Major Theodore Woodbridge, who was described as "a man of great merit & influence," moved to backcountry Pennsylvania after purchasing 1,200 acres from the Delaware Company. In addition to his sizable land holdings, Woodbridge's status as a leading settler rested on the kin network he created by seating family members on his lands.<sup>39</sup> Woodbridge repeatedly altered his neighbors' attitudes toward Pennsylvania. In the spring of 1802, he declared his intention of standing "between his Settlers and harm under an Ejectment." However, in the following year, James Ralston reported that Woodbridge had been instrumental in convincing the inhabitants of his settlement to renounce the Connecticut claim. A year later, Woodbridge again exercised his powers. But on this occasion, he busied himself with "exciting" Yankee settlers to reject the proposals of the Pennsylvania Landholders. By the fall of 1804, Woodbridge was again

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<sup>38</sup> Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, September 19, 1797, Drinker Papers, Journal; Preston to Drinker, October 13, 1797, *Ibid.*; Extract of a Letter from Wayne County, July 21, 1801, CCP 1:76; Henry Drinker to Tench Coxe, August 20, 1801, SCP 11:182.

<sup>39</sup> Goodrich, *History of Wayne County*, 268-270; Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, March 8, 1803, Drinker Papers, Journal.

heading up resistance in Wayne County. On one occasion, he used his position as a justice of the peace to protect his settlement from meddlesome state officials when he arrested a party of Pennsylvania surveyors for trespassing.<sup>40</sup>

Recognizing the important role they played in shaping local opinion, Pennsylvania and its landholders went to great lengths to obtain the cooperation of leading men in quelling settler dissent. In the summer of 1803, Thomas Cooper wrote to Robert Rose and urged him to contact several prominent Connecticut claimants who could supply him with information on intruders and, at the very least, help him find safe passage through areas controlled by Wild Yankees. On Wyalusing Creek, Cooper advised Rose to visit Minor York who, according to reports, had created "a great Schism" among his neighbors by abandoning the Connecticut claim. On Wysox Creek, Cooper recommended that Rose meet with another influential settler, William Means. Means represented the more entrepreneurial brand of leading man. Before he came to the Pennsylvania backcountry, Means had labored as a boatman on the Susquehanna. By the turn of the century, however, he had become a prosperous merchant and the owner of a distillery, a tavern, a ferry, and other commercial ventures. Cooper believed that since Means had "much property at stake," he would "be a friend of the Pennsy<sup>a</sup> title," even though he held his lands under rights from the Susquehannah Company.<sup>41</sup> As Cooper predicted, leading men of substantial wealth often came to support Pennsylvania because they believed that doing so would best secure their property and prosperity.

The relative wealth and local standing of leading men made them vulnerable to pressure from state officials and the Landholders' Association. Prominent settlers, who often had much to gain from resistance, also had much to lose if opposition to the state faltered.

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<sup>40</sup> Jason Torrey to Edward Tilghman, May 31, 1802, Torrey Papers; James Ralston to the Landholders' Committee, May 17, 1803, Records of the Pennsylvania Landholders; Edward Tilghman to Thomas McKean, November 25, 1804, *Ibid.*; Jason Torrey to Edward Tilghman, October 10, 1804, Torrey Papers.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas Cooper to Robert Rose, July 2, 1803, CCP 2:31.

Many ultimately decided that the risks of resistance outweighed its benefits. For example, in the spring and summer of 1801, three of Towanda Creek's leading men, Orr Scoville, Stephen Allen, and David Allen, signed petitions offering to relinquish their Connecticut title. After promoting resistance along Towanda Creek in the 1790s, Scoville became more conservative after the turn of the century. His change of heart may have been rooted in his desire to retain possession of a costly frame house (the first one built in his neighborhood), a spacious barn, and a valuable 360-acre farm. The Allens may have had similar motivations: the brothers possessed lucrative grist and saw mills in addition to their farms. Again, the uncertainty of the Connecticut claim threatened these investments. Leading Yankees like the Allens must have asked themselves why they should take the chance of losing valuable improvements and the fruit of years of labor when, by paying off the Pennsylvania Landholders, they could replace their Connecticut deeds with a secure state title.<sup>42</sup>

In Athens, once a hotbed of Yankee dissent, many leading men gave up resistance in favor of economic security. The wealth and commercial assets of the town's chief inhabitants caused them to place class and self-interest before the needs of townspeople who could not afford Pennsylvania deeds. Athens was home to several resident proprietors of the Susquehannah Company. After the turn of the century, these men had much to lose and little to gain from continuing their support for the Connecticut claim. They lived in well-appointed homes worth hundreds of dollars, possessed tracts of land whose values reached above a thousand dollars (James Irwin alone held fourteen town lots in Athens), and ran prospering mills and taverns. In every respect, they had attained a level of wealth far beyond that of the average Yankee settler.<sup>43</sup> With sizable holdings such as these at

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<sup>42</sup> List of Connecticut Relinquishments, June-August, 1801, *SCP* 11:193. Orr Scovell's land holdings are described in Heverly, *Patriot and Pioneer Families*, 1:159; and in *The Luzerne County Federalist*, February 2, 1805. For the property holdings of David and Stephen Allen see the Direct Tax, Luzerne County, no. 375: 149.

<sup>43</sup> Direct Tax, Luzerne County, nos. 374:43-49 and 375:162-66; Murray, *History of Old*

stake, it was no wonder that John Franklin discovered that many of his associates carried "water on both Shoulders." In fact, in 1801 several resident proprietors of the Susquehannah Company delivered a petition to the Landholders' Association that signaled their willingness to abandon resistance and purchase state titles.<sup>44</sup>

In contrast to the tendency toward accommodation seen among the backcountry's wealthiest, most commercially-oriented leading men, prominent settlers in more marginal backwoods neighborhoods often maintained their support for resistance. Nathaniel Allen, who Robert Rose called the "most influential man" along Sugar Creek, reflected the relative poverty of his community. Allen attained only a modest level of personal wealth: in 1798 he owned a home valued at \$50, a log barn, and a 150-acre farm whose per-acre value was only slightly above the average for his settlement. However, Allen had been an active speculator in the Connecticut claim and served as one of the Susquehannah Company's leading surveyors and land agents. Through his connections with the company, Allen had gained rights to thousands of acres of land and was instrumental in the settlement of Burlington. Pennsylvania commissioned him a justice of the peace in 1800, further adding to his local prestige. Finally, after the turn of the century, Allen rounded out his profile as a leading man by building and operating a grist and saw mill.<sup>45</sup>

In maintaining their support for Yankee settlers' soil rights, leading men such as Nathaniel Allen also confirmed their commitment to local loyalties. Allen recognized that his status was based not only on his wealth or outside connections, but on his neighbor's respect and his power as a local magistrate and mill-operator. He embraced his parochial

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*Tioga*, 359.

<sup>44</sup> John Franklin to John Jenkins, July 22, 1801, *SCP* 11:147; Thomas Cooper to Thomas McKean, November 15, 1802, *Ibid.*, 340; Letter to the Landholders' Association from the Rev. John Smith, July 20, 1801, Minutes of the Pennsylvania Landholders' Association.

<sup>45</sup> Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, July 21, 1803, *CCP* 2:38; Direct Tax, Luzerne County, no. 375:155; Bradsby, *History of Bradford County*, 391; Heverly, *Patriot and Pioneer Families*, 1:246.

base of support and helped his neighbors--many of whom were too poor or too stubborn to pay for state titles--to oppose Pennsylvania and its landholders. On more than one occasion, he took the lead in rallying support in favor of resistance. Sugar Creek's preeminent leading man was probably involved in the mobbing of Thomas Smiley in 1801 as well as the shooting of Edward Gobin in 1804. He also headed up local efforts to guard against intruding surveyors and land agents. At numerous settler meetings, Allen spoke out against accommodation with the Landholders' Association and assured his neighbors that their claim to the land was "as holy as the God of nature could make it." Sugar Creek's inhabitants stood on the margins of a growing market economy and the social impact of commercialism. In such liminal settlements, leading men like Allen were far more likely to remain committed to resistance, community, and localism.<sup>46</sup>

In the backcountry, class and localism were not easily reconciled. Leading Yankees found it increasingly difficult to balance individual interest against community loyalties as Pennsylvania and its land claimants pressured them to choose between secure property rights under the state or the more risky prospect of holding their lands by force. Leading men in more economically developed, less isolated settlements found that they could turn their backs on the Connecticut cause and maintain their position by embracing state authority and sponsoring like-minded settlers. Meanwhile, prominent settlers in marginal backwoods enclaves found that their status rested on the support of their neighbors, which in turn depended upon their continued service as resistance leaders.

Most leading men found it difficult to navigate their way between resistance and accommodation, between local allegiance and self-interest. On the one hand, state authorities and the Landholders' Association eagerly courted those who seemed willing to

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<sup>46</sup> For Allen's role as a resistance leading, see *The Luzerne County Federalist*, August 20, 1803; Nathaniel Allen to John Jenkins, June 25, 1804 in Murray, *History of Old Tioga*, 420-421; and Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, August 11, 1803, CCP:2, 43.

aid the progress of accommodation and, with equal zeal, prosecuted prominent settlers who seemed determined to promote resistance. On the other, Yankee settlers looked to their leading men for guidance but were ready to chastise those who betrayed community interests.

Pennsylvania punished leading settlers who refused to promote accommodation by bringing suits against them under the Intrusion Act. By November 1801, the state had issued warrants against a number of prominent Connecticut claimants. Besides prosecuting long-time Yankee radicals John Franklin, John Jenkins, and Elisha Satterlee, Pennsylvania also brought charges against Nathaniel Allen, Theodore Woodbridge, Josiah Grant, and other local leading men.<sup>47</sup> Josiah Grant, described as "a prominent character" and a "large Speculator," had been very active in buying and selling Susquehannah Company rights during the 1790s.<sup>48</sup> In 1798 he moved from Vermont to the upper reaches of Wysox Creek to oversee the development of his lands in the town of Graham. Determined to protect his fledgling settlement, and perhaps influenced by his experiences as a Green Mountain Boy in Vermont, Grant became a stubborn defender of Yankee property rights. His decision soon made him a target of legal action by Pennsylvania and the Landholders' Association. In November 1803, a Luzerne County court found Grant guilty of intrusion and conspiracy.<sup>49</sup> Ezekiel Hyde, a proprietor of the Delaware Company and an inhabitant of the town of Usher, was another Yankee agitator who attracted the attention of state prosecutors. The Landholder's Association took steps to hasten the ruin of Usher's leading

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<sup>47</sup> Summary of Court Proceedings of Luzerne and Wayne Counties, November & December 1801, *SCP* 11:250-251; Robert Rose to Henry Drinker, September 1, 1803, *CCP* 2:59.

<sup>48</sup> For entries concerning Grant's activities as a Susquehannah Company speculator see the Susquehannah Company Account Books, Liber C:559-569; Liber D:31-33, 44-45; Liber E: 217-228, 258, 264, 332, 334, 340-41, 418, 427; Liber F:70-74; and Liber H:209-210, 212-213, 225-226, 258-259, Connecticut Historical Society (hereafter cited as SCA).

<sup>49</sup> Heverly, *Patriot and Pioneer Families*, 1:300; Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, August 11, 1803, *CCP* 2:43; Rose to Hodgdon, September 17, 1803, *Ibid.*, 58; Rose to Hodgdon, November 26, 1803, *Ibid.*, 68.

man when they sent backcountry trouble-shooter Robert Rose to collect evidence against Hyde and to convince settlers to testify against him in court.<sup>50</sup>

Of course, state authorities and Pennsylvania speculators preferred to coopt leading men rather than attempt to neutralize their influence in lengthy and unpredictable court proceedings. In fact, the Landholders' Association readily dropped charges against prominent settlers if they renounced the Connecticut claim and encouraged their neighbors to follow suit. For example, the landholders scraped their plans to prosecute Isaac Hancock, a leading Wyalusing settler, after he agreed to give evidence against Ezekiel Hyde.<sup>51</sup> Hancock was not the only leading man to turn against Wild Yankees. In the summer of 1801, David Paine and several other resident proprietors of the Susquehannah Company gave evidence against their one-time business associates and fellow resistance leaders. Ultimately, their testimony led to the indictment of John Jenkins, Elisha Satterlee, John Franklin and other Wild Yankees for intrusion and conspiracy.<sup>52</sup>

Leading men faced pressure not only from Pennsylvania and its landholders but from their communities. Prominent settlers who encouraged resistance ran the risk of legal prosecution, but those who turned their backs on Yankee soil rights risked censure or worse at the hands of their neighbors. Minor York discovered that cooperation with the Landholders' Association undermined his authority along Wyalusing Creek. In the summer of 1803, he labored to convince his neighbors to relinquish their Connecticut deeds. He managed to persuade forty settlers to sign a petition that signaled their willingness to negotiate with the Pennsylvania landholders, but lamented that he "had only gained himself enemies" in doing so. In discussing York's relationship with his neighbors, Robert Rose admitted that the influence "he had formerly possessed had been greatly destroyed by his

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<sup>50</sup> Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, June 30, 1804, SCP 11:491; Rose to Hodgdon, November 2, 1803, CCP 2:60; Rose to Hodgdon, November 10, 1803, *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>51</sup> Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, November 2, 1803, CCP 2:60.

<sup>52</sup> A List of the Names of Offenders Under Intrusion Law, August 1801, CCP 1:87; Daniel Smith and Charles Hall to Abraham Horn, 1801, *Ibid.*, 94.

siding with the Pennsylvanians." Minor York's position was so tenuous that Rose avoided meeting him: Rose valued York as an informant but feared that his being seen with an agent of the Landholders' Association would only further damage his reputation.<sup>53</sup>

Minor York was not the only prominent settler who lost power by switching his allegiance to Pennsylvania. Isaac Hancock, after helping to bring a warrant against Ezekiel Hyde for intrusion, suffered a similar breakdown in relations with his neighbors. Hancock, who once held the respect of his community, became known as a "Pennemite" among Yankee settlers. Robert Rose recognized that many leading men walked a dangerously thin line between local allegiance and self-interest and used this knowledge to his advantage. Rose admitted he sought out Wild Yankee leaders, knowing well that if he could not persuade them to abandon resistance, that at least his visit would raise "suspicions of their intentions" in the minds of settlers.<sup>54</sup>

When leading men blatantly transgressed local loyalties, the result was often violent. On several occasions, Wild Yankees threatened and assaulted chief inhabitants who cooperated with the state. Bartlet Hinds provides the most striking example of a prominent settler whose defiance of local sentiment made him the victim of a Yankee mob. Likewise, John Tyler, a prominent inhabitant of the Nine Partners settlement, escaped physical harm but was "much abused by ill will and ill language from some of his disaffected neighbors." Tyler's troubles started when he offered to work for the Landholders' Association; fearing for his safety, he soon severed his ties with Pennsylvania's land speculators.<sup>55</sup>

The struggle between resistance and accommodation did not bring every leading man into conflict with Yankee settlers. Several prominent Connecticut claimants maintained

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<sup>53</sup> Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, August 21, 1803, CCP 2:49; Rose to Hodgdon, July 3, 1803, *Ibid.*, 33; Rose to Hodgdon, July 10, 1803, *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>54</sup> Robert Rose to Samuel Hodgdon, November 2, 1801, CCP 2:60; Rose to Hodgdon, August 11, 1803, *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>55</sup> Jason Torrey to Henry Drinker, July 17, 1802, Torrey Papers.



solidarity with their neighbors and continued to serve the needs of their communities, even in the face of economic ruin and imprisonment. Nathaniel Allen was one prominent backcountry inhabitant who remained loyal to his community. Like many other leading Yankees, Allen had accrued a large interest in the Connecticut claim during the 1790s. However, unlike many of his counterparts, Allen maintained his position as a resistance leader instead of bowing to pressure from the state and the Landholders' Association.<sup>56</sup> Another prominent settler who maintained his authority among his neighbors was Jonas Ingham. A native of Bucks County, Ingham settled along Wyalusing Creek in 1789 under a Connecticut title. His influence was based not so much upon his wealth as upon his outspoken support of the Connecticut claim. In 1804 the inhabitants of Luzerne County rewarded Ingham for his steadfastness by sending him to the state legislature as their representative. Once there, Ingham worked to forward the interests of Connecticut claimants.

Under Jonas Ingham's leadership, Wild Yankees along Wyalusing Creek maintained resistance long after most other settlements had lost their ability to mount an effective opposition to state rule. For instance, guided by Ingham, Wyalusing's settlers successfully drove off a surveyor employed by Pennsylvania landholders in 1806. When he got word of the surveyor's approach, Ingham advised his neighbors "to make any kind of opposition they pleased only not to kill or hurt nobody, nor let anybody appear in arms." He knew any action that could be interpreted as armed insurrection would only bring down the militia upon their heads. When the surveying party appeared, a Yankee mob formed. Some settlers hid in the woods and fired guns into the air while others--who did not carry firearms--surrounded and threatened the surveyors. Tensions rose when the surveyors ignored these challenges and continued to advance. Ingham, fearing "some worse mischief

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<sup>56</sup> For information on Allen's speculating activities see SCA, Liber C:570-571; Liber F:80-85; Liber H:7; and Liber I:72-73, 229.

would happen," told the settlers to break the surveyor's compass. A Yankee complied with his order and the surveyors, lacking instruments to carry out their work, went away. After this encounter, Ingham continued to mediate between settlers and state officials. He defended Wild Yankees in court and later worked to arrange a settlement with Pennsylvania landholders that was agreeable to his neighbors.<sup>57</sup>

Leading men such as Ingham and Allen remained in-step with their neighbors while others, such as Bartlet Hinds and Minor York, found themselves at odds with them. But all of these prominent Connecticut claimants had one thing in common: they found the turn of the century a troubling time when their influence and authority was challenged by Pennsylvania, by their neighbors, and by a set of relationships born of an emerging commercial social order. Many Yankees, leading men and ordinary settlers alike, found it difficult to understand the full dimensions of this transformation.

Backcountry leading men, both willingly and unwillingly, found themselves at the center of the contentious process that led Yankee settlers from resistance to reconciliation. After the turn of the century, the northeast frontier's chief Yankee inhabitants increasingly found that they spanned two worlds: a world of backcountry community life and an emerging world of frontier development, improvement, and entrepreneurship. Some leading men embraced the former, others the latter, but all discovered that their status as go-betweens was not an easy one. A number of leading settlers--men like Bartlet Hinds--fell afoul of Wild Yankees, others came into conflict with state authorities. However, no matter if they supported resistance or accommodation, most of these figures ended up playing a role in bringing the backcountry's contest over property and power to an end.

Slowly, settlement by settlement, Wild Yankees disavowed violence and came to terms with the state of Pennsylvania and the Landholders' Association. The process of

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<sup>57</sup> Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 443; Murray, *Old Tioga Point*, 406 n. 15.

reconciliation began in 1799 with the passage of the Compromise Act but only gained a foothold outside the Wyoming Valley after the turn of the century. Pockets of Wild Yankees remained defiant until the middle of the decade. Eventually, even leading Wild Yankees signed petitions that signaled their willingness to give up their Connecticut titles and negotiate the purchase of Pennsylvania deeds. However, just because Yankee settlers turned their backs on violent resistance did not mean that they abandoned their pursuit of agrarian independence. Indeed, the written pledges that heralded Yankees' turn to reconciliation also contained language that evoked an agrarian vision of property and local autonomy. In one petition, settlers declared that they had "subdued a rugged Wilderness by the hard strokes of labour" and asserted this labor gave them "a Just and equitable Right" to the lands they held.<sup>58</sup> The localism that informed these statements did not disappear from the face of agrarian America, but it did change.

The greatest limit to revolutionary backcountry localism was its inability to reconcile the ideal of community consensus with a growing reality of social stratification. It was this conflict between class and locale that undermined localism's ability to sustain agrarian resistance along the northeast frontier. Yankee communities that were once relatively egalitarian started to experience social differentiation at the turn of the century. Specifically, backcountry leading men started to separate themselves from their more humble neighbors not only--or even primarily--through their superior wealth, but through their changing relationship with institutions and authorities that existed beyond the local level.

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<sup>58</sup> Petition of Ulster Inhabitants to the Pennsylvania Legislature, November 28, 1804, *SCP* 11:512-13, 512 n. 2.

CHAPTER VIII  
FEDERALISTS, FREEMASONS, & METHODISTS

*I have been four months and eight days in Tioga circuit, one of the most disagreeable places for traveling I was even in, among a refractory sort of people. I lived hard and labored hard, but I fear did but little good. . . May the labors of my successor be blessed more than mine have been!--William Colbert, April 16, 1793<sup>1</sup>*

On the fourth of July 1808, it looked as if property disputes along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier would once again erupt in violence. The previous day, Deputy Marshall Jacob Hart had arrived in Athens to serve a writ of ejectment against Elizabeth Mathewson. The widow of the recently deceased Yankee stalwart Elisha Mathewson, Elizabeth held land in the town under the Connecticut claim. Henry Welles, a Pennsylvania claimant, challenged her right to the property. Henry's father George had obtained Pennsylvania deeds covering most of Athens in 1798 and succeeded in buying out most of the town's Yankee proprietors in the following years. Only two Connecticut claimants, Elisha Mathewson and Jonathan Harris, refused to sell. After Elisha's death, Elizabeth Mathewson and George Welles came to an agreement: Mathewson was allowed to keep her home, the tavern she ran, and the land they stood on; in return, Welles obtained the rest of Mathewson's property in the town of Athens. In 1808 Elizabeth Mathewson reneged on the deal and decided to fight for her land. Welles responded with an ejectment suit, thus setting the stage for Mathewson's confrontation with Deputy Marshall Hart.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William Colbert's Journal, April 16, 1793, in George Peck, *Early Methodism Within the Bounds of the Old Genesee Conference from 1788 to 1828* (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1860), 53.

<sup>2</sup> Louise Welles Murray, *A History of Old Tioga Point and Early Athens* (Wilkes-Barre:

Instead of coming to blows, Hart and Mathewson reached an understanding that defused the situation. On the night of July 3 deputy Hart came in secret to Elizabeth Mathewson's home and told her that if she made a show of resisting the writ, he would not force it upon her. The next day, widow Mathewson loaded an old musket, readied a pot of boiling water (frontier women commonly used hot water to deter unwanted visits from deputies and land agents), and waited. As Hart had promised, he approached Mathewson's house and, seeing that she was armed, retreated from the scene.<sup>3</sup> The agreement reached between Mathewson and Hart symbolized a much broader process whereby Connecticut claimants and Pennsylvania finally came to terms. To understand the move toward reconciliation, it is necessary to consider how social change transformed backcountry localism in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

This chapter explores turn-of-the-century social change in the backcountry and how it affected local culture in northeast Pennsylvania. Specifically, it examines three forces that shaped the revolutionary frontier: evangelical Christianity, national politics, and the numerous voluntary associations that emerged in the early republic. This look at social change along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier does not attempt to present a detailed model of the evolution of backcountry localism through the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Instead, it details the relationship between local culture, America's post-revolutionary social order, and the decline of Yankee resistance.

After the turn of the century, leading men along the northeast frontier increasingly looked beyond their communities for power, status, and advancement. Ambitious Connecticut claimants who sought to establish a new relationship with the culture of localism became caught up in two of the early republic's most dynamic social

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Reader Press, 1907), 353-356, 359-360, 382-386, 388-391; David Craft, *History of Bradford County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co., 1878), 277-278; H.C. Bradsby, *History of Bradford County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: S.B. Nelson & Co., 1891), 415.

<sup>3</sup> Murray, *History of Old Tioga*, 390-391.

movements--the growth of Freemasonry and the emergence of national political parties. These men formed ties to the world beyond the backcountry and discovered that they had more in common with the Pennsylvania landholders they had opposed than with the Yankee settlers they had led. Many prominent Connecticut claimants and one-time Yankee agitators decided that if they could not beat the Pennsylvania Landholders, they could at least join them in their pursuit of wealth and status.<sup>4</sup>

Leading men were not the only ones who reformulated localism: settlers who embraced evangelical Christianity transformed local culture in the backcountry. Frontier migration, land disputes, and the growing power of the state and its landholders all threatened to unravel the close-knit relationships that were at the heart of Yankee settlers' localist world view. To maintain their sense of community, settlers turned to evangelical religion and forged a new set of social relationships out of a common spiritual ethos. In particular, Methodism offered Yankees a sense of self-worth and a source of cohesion in an increasingly unpredictable world. However, like Freemasonry and national politics, the Methodist Episcopal Church altered the parochial outlook of settlers by linking them to a movement that transcended the boundaries of local culture.

The growing influence of national political parties, Freemasonry, and Methodism among Yankee settlers points to the ways in which changing social conditions transformed backcountry localism after the turn of the century. The backcountry became the site of a struggle between local culture and a growing array of translocal forces and institutions. The Revolution had nurtured frontier localism by intensifying and legitimizing settlers' struggles for land and power, but it also set in motion forces that would ultimately diminish localism.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Murray, *History of Old Tioga*, 359-360

<sup>5</sup> Andrew R. L. Clayton, *The Frontier Republic: Ideology and Politics in the Ohio Country, 1780-1825* (Kent, Ohio: the Kent State Univ. Press, 1986), 2-4, 52-53. 69-70. For insights into the impact of the Revolution on local culture, see Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1978),

### **The Dispute Comes to an End**

The move toward the peaceful settlement of all outstanding land disputes between Connecticut and Pennsylvania claimants was one product of the decline of revolutionary backcountry localism. As the clannishness and parochialism of Yankee settlers gave way, so did the final barriers between conflict and reconciliation. By the close of the first decade of the nineteenth century, most Connecticut claimants had come to terms with Pennsylvania and the Landholder's Association, while those who remained unreconciled lacked the community support they needed to successfully resist the state. The few stubborn Wild Yankees left in northeast Pennsylvania either left the state or grudgingly purchased Pennsylvania deeds. Instead of promoting resistance, many leading Yankees now pursued a course of compromise. For instance, the long-time Wild Yankee leader John Franklin turned his back on insurgency and violence. Indeed, when Elizabeth Mathewson asked him for aid in her dispute with George and Henry Welles, Franklin only offered to help her engage a lawyer. Alone and isolated, Elizabeth Mathewson made the best terms she could with her adversaries. In October 1808, she turned over her lands (except for her home and tavern and the property on which they stood) to Henry Welles for two hundred dollars.<sup>6</sup>

Pennsylvania quieted the last remaining murmurs of Yankee dissent by expanding the terms of the Compromise Act to include categories of Connecticut claimants not formerly covered by the law. In 1807 the state legislature passed an amendment to the compromise law that authorized the act's commissioners to examine and confirm the titles of Connecticut claimants who lived in the fifteen towns and had obtained legitimate Susquehannah Company deeds *after* the Trenton Decree. This amendment guaranteed that

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80-82, 86-87, 119; and Michael Zuckerman, *Peaceable Kingdoms: New England Towns in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 220-221.

<sup>6</sup> Murray, *History of Old Tioga*, 384, 391.

the vast majority of Yankee settlers in the fifteen towns would be able to take advantage of the Compromise Act's generous terms, and thus extinguished any lingering resistance in these settlements. In fact, less than a year after the amendment went into effect, the Assembly officially recognized the end of land disputes in the fifteen towns by passing an act that officially disbanded the state commission that administered the compromise law.<sup>7</sup>

Pennsylvania did not limit this liberal treatment to settlers in the Wyoming Valley: in 1810 the state resurrected the Compromise Act and extended its operation to the Susquehannah Company towns of Bedford and Ulster. The latter town contained a large number of long time Wild Yankees. These restless settlers were finally quieted by the Compromise Act. The operation of the law in Ulster demonstrated just how far down the road of reconciliation many settlers had come. Joseph Kingsbury once considered settlers who accepted Pennsylvania deeds to be "traitors unworthy to live among full blooded Yankees." He now accepted a position as clerk to the commissioners of the Ulster-Bedford Act and later worked for them as a surveyor. John Franklin, Elisha Satterlee, Joseph Kinney, and many other notorious Wild Yankees took advantage of the law and discarded their Connecticut deeds in favor of state titles.<sup>8</sup>

This spirit of cooperation was also apparent in Athens. By 1810 the town was a bustling commercial center that supported the grain trade between the Genesee Valley and Baltimore. The settlement's leading landowners, both Pennsylvania and Connecticut claimants alike, came to see that settling their differences would only improve their chances of tapping into this newfound prosperity. In 1809 the town's chief inhabitants

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<sup>7</sup> Amendments to the Compromise Act, April 9, 1807, Robert J. Taylor, ed., *The Susquehannah Company Papers*, 11 vols. (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1971) 11:519-521 (hereafter cited as *SCP*); Act Ending the Work of the Commission Under the Compromise Act, March 28, 1808, *Ibid.*, 528-529.

<sup>8</sup> Journal of the Commissioners of the Ulster-Bedford Act, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Joseph Kingsbury to John Jenkins, June 28, 1801, *SCP* 11:96.



joined together to help Henry Welles secure a seat in Pennsylvania's House of Representatives. Welles, who had once challenged the Connecticut deed of widow Mathewson, took a leading role in an attempt to get Athens included in the provisions of the Compromise Act. Though Welles and his supporters were unsuccessful, their efforts demonstrate that the backcountry's leading men were settling their differences--at least as far as contested land titles were concerned--and looking for ways to develop and improve their communities.<sup>9</sup>

The steady move toward the settlement of disputes between Yankees and Pennsylvanians was not just a product of the state's decision to extend the provisions of the Compromise Act: social change and the emergence of a new set of values encouraged reconciliation at the grass roots level. Often, the individuals who most actively promoted peace were the same leading Yankees who once orchestrated conflict. This about-face was part of a larger process whereby prominent Connecticut claimants reshaped their identities and reconfigured their relationship to their communities and the world beyond.

### **Party Spirit & Fraternal Order**

Leading men redefined themselves and their relationship to local culture by bringing partisan politics and Freemasonry to the backcountry. Into the first decade of the nineteenth century, land disputes determined political loyalties in the region. Settlers voted with reference not to national issues, but to whether candidates supported the Connecticut or Pennsylvania claim. However, by the turn of the century this situation was changing: leading Yankees became increasingly aware of national and state politics and more willing to place party loyalties on a par with local ones.

Like party politics, Freemasonry led leading men beyond the bounds of local culture. The Masonic order was a secret society which, besides advancing fraternity among

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<sup>9</sup> Murray, *History of Old Tioga*, 427-428, 431-434, 393.

Masons, promoted the economic well-being and social prestige of the order's members. Freemasonry appealed to Connecticut claimants who wished to link themselves to a world of gentility and improvement that existed beyond the backcountry and helped to bridge the social gulf that separated prominent Yankee settlers from Pennsylvania landholders.

The post-1800 political behavior of northeast Pennsylvania's Yankee inhabitants, especially, reveals a shift from a localist perspective to a greater awareness of translocal issues and institutions. In the eighteenth century, local culture framed national and state politics; however, by 1820 this was no longer true. Instead of determining Yankees' political allegiances, localism became just another factor to be manipulated by politicians whose loyalties lay not only with their constituents but with nationally-organized parties.

Only by understanding the influence of localism is it possible to make sense of northeast Pennsylvania's political landscape. The early republic's backcountry regions almost universally aligned themselves with the Anti-Federalists and, later, with the Jeffersonian Republicans because their platforms appealed to the localist, decentralized ethos of agrarian America. Backwoods farmers likewise opposed the centralizing policies of Federalists whom they identified with the commercial, metropolitan interests of merchants and land speculators. Yet the northern reaches of Luzerne County, the Yankee heartland of northeast Pennsylvania, remained a Federalist stronghold till 1816, long after most backcountry regions across the United States and even the rest of Pennsylvania had gone over to the Republican camp. The reasons behind the popularity of the Federalist party were rooted in the localist outlook of the region's inhabitants. Yankee settlers ignored the Federalists' national policies and focused on their local reputation.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Saul Cornell, "Aristocracy Assailed: The Ideology of Backcountry Anti-Federalism," *Journal of American History* 76 (March 1990): 1148-72; Murray, *History of Old Tioga*, 454; James E. Brady, "Wyoming: A Study of John Franklin and the Connecticut Settlement into Pennsylvania" (Ph.D. diss., Syracuse Univ., 1973), 306; Bradsby, *History of Bradford County*, 283-284.

Around the turn of the century, local issues and local loyalties determined that hard line Yankees would vote Federalist and pro-Pennsylvania settlers would vote Republican. Land disputes between Yankees and Pennsylvania claimants framed party politics. For example, during the 1799 gubernatorial race between Federalist James Ross and Republican Thomas McKean, a notice appeared in the *Wilkes-Barre Gazette* entitled, "The PEACE and INTERESTS of the Government and People of Pennsylvania endangered: OR, The CONNECTICUT CLAIM To our Lands most injuriously aided." The polemic accused James Ross of assisting Yankee intruders while he served as a senator in the state legislature. Here and elsewhere, local Republicans attempted to build up support among Pennsylvania claimants by associating their Federalist opponents with the Connecticut claim. In a similar fashion, Yankee settlers offered their votes to candidates whom they believed would be sympathetic to the Connecticut claim. Indeed, during the election of 1799, John Franklin traveled through the northeast frontier obtaining promises of support for James Ross "on the ground that he was for the Connecticut title." Franklin's tactic worked: Ross received 979 votes in Luzerne County, McKean only 259. When Ross and McKean again contended for the post of governor in 1802, the majority of Connecticut claimants again associated the Federalist party with the Connecticut claim and voted accordingly. This time Ross received 680 votes in Luzerne County, McKean only 278. The three election districts in the northern portion of Luzerne County, a region dominated by Wild Yankees, proved to be the most pro-Federalist. James Ross received about 59 percent of the votes cast in the county but obtained just over 70 percent of the votes (158 out of 205) cast in the election districts of Tioga, Wysox, and Wyalusing.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> "The PEACE and INTERESTS of the Government and People of Pennsylvania endangered....," *Wilkes-Barre Gazette*, October 29, 1799; Letter from Tench Coxe, August 12, 1800, *SCP* 10:529; Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 192; Thomas Cooper to Thomas McKean, November 15, 1802, *SCP* 11:339.

Local land disputes also overshadowed translocal loyalties and national party organizations during the elections of 1801. In June, Joseph Kingsbury, a Federalist, wrote to John Jenkins, a Republican, expressing his desire to “lay aside” partisan politics and “unite for the common good of Yankees.” Indeed, Kingsbury and Jenkins--Federalists and Republicans--ignored party allegiance and supported candidates who had proven their loyalty to the Connecticut cause. Yankees ran John Franklin and Jonas Ingham for the Pennsylvania Assembly even though Franklin was a Federalist and Ingham a “Stanch Republican.” What made this cross-party ticket workable was the fact that “no man on earth” was more opposed to the Pennsylvania Landholders than Ingham. Simply put, Yankee settlers believed that a common attachment to the Connecticut claim should take precedence over political differences. By 1803 Connecticut claimants had created a “Yankee” or “half share Ticket” that brought together Federalists and Republicans in opposition to Pennsylvania and its landholders. This local political coalition gained influence throughout the northeast frontier, even in the Wyoming Valley’s fifteen towns. Ebenezer Bowman pointed to the success of such localist politics when he observed that while “at least eight tenths” of Luzerne County was Federalist, Republicans such as John Jenkins and Ezekiel Hyde repeatedly won elections. He rightly concluded that this phenomenon could be accounted for only by Yankees’ “fixed determination to pursue their claim.” <sup>12</sup>

Until the second decade of the nineteenth century, Yankee settlers’ cultural heritage and parochialism predisposed them to vote Federalist. Though the Federalist party was the party of commercial and elite interests, it was also the party of New England. Many Connecticut claimants supported the Federalists because they maintained ties, including political loyalties, with their New England homeland. More important, Yankees clung to

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<sup>12</sup> Joseph Kingsbury to John Jenkins, June 28, 1801, *SCP* 11:95-96; Ebenezer Bowman to Henry Drinker, October 14, 1803, *Ibid.*, 420-422; Samuel Gordon to John Jenkins, September 1801, *Ibid.*, 202.

the belief that an appeal to the Federal government offered them the best chance of securing their land claims and so supported the political party--the Federalists--that championed the power and authority of the national government. Thus Simon Kinney, Joseph Kingsbury, Henry Spalding, and other prominent Yankee settlers actively supported the Federalist party. These "Sheshequinites," as Yankee Federalists came to be known, mixed party politics with efforts to win concessions for Connecticut claimants. In contrast, those who opposed the Connecticut claim continued their opposition to Yankee power by siding with the Republican party. Henry and Charles Welles were Pennsylvania landholders and leading Republicans. Likewise, Minor York, Elisha Keeler, Job Irish, and other Yankee leading men who had abandoned the Connecticut claim came out in support of the Republicans in the early 1800s.<sup>13</sup>

Interpersonal ties and face-to-face loyalties also exerted a powerful influence on political behavior in the backcountry. For instance, Federalism remained strong among Wild Yankees because John Franklin was himself a staunch Federalist. In 1801 John Franklin ran for a seat in the House of Representatives. In the election districts of Tioga and Wyalusing he received 135 votes while John Hollenback, his leading Republican opponent, obtained only twenty-one. In 1802 and 1803 Franklin repeated this landslide victory: in 1802 he obtained every vote but three in the election districts of northern Luzerne County; in 1803 he received every vote but ten. Personal loyalties also worked in favor of Republicans with a long history of Yankee resistance. Even though he was a political associate of George Welles, John Jenkins received 147 out of 151 votes in the election districts of Tioga and Wyalusing during his bid for Luzerne County sheriff in 1801.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Bradsby, *History of Bradford County*, 283-284, 287; Murray, *History of Old Tioga*, 454-458.

<sup>14</sup> Bradsby, *History of Bradford County*, 282, 283-284, 288; Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 192; John Franklin to John Jenkins, September 16, 1801, *SCP* 11:198.

America's political parties emerged in an era when factionalism was looked upon as a danger to republican freedoms rather than as an essential facet of democracy. This atmosphere helps to explain why Yankee settlers often submerged party affiliations beneath local loyalties. John Jenkins illustrated the ambivalence many Americans felt toward the growth of political parties in a letter he sent to Ira Stephens during the gubernatorial election of 1799. Jenkins observed that parties took "Great pains" to influence voters and believed that such activities were a "Great Infringment on the freedom and Secred Rights of Ellections." In particular, he blamed the Federalists for corrupting elections and poisoning the minds of the people. Farther on in the same letter, however, Jenkins informed Stephens that he belonged to the party which endeavored to "hold Sacred our Constitutional privileges" (the Republicans). Here and elsewhere, Americans lamented the dangers of political factions while simultaneously engaging in partisan politics.<sup>15</sup>

Even though leading Yankees may have disapproved of parties in theory, they embraced them in practice and began to pay an ever-increasing amount of attention to state and national politics. Yankees submerged factional differences beneath their support for their soil rights, but this did not mean that party divisions ceased to exist. Moreover, as support for the Connecticut claim dwindled, political differences between Yankees came to the surface. During the election of 1801, John Franklin noted how two one-time Wild Yankees placed party loyalty before the Connecticut claim when he informed John Jenkins that Republicans Job Irish and Reed Brockway had been seen electioneering for John

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<sup>15</sup> John Jenkins to Ira Stephens, June 3, 1799, *SCP* 11:475-476; Steven C. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730-1840* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1996), 232; Alan Taylor, "'The Art of Hook & Snivey': Political Culture in Upstate New York During the 1790s" *Journal of American History* 79 (March 1993): 1372-1396; Ronald P. Formisano, *The Transformation of Political Culture: Massachusetts Parties, 1790s-1840s* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983), 10.

Hollenback, a well-known advocate of state authority. Likewise, in 1802 Thomas Cooper reported that moderate Yankee settlers in the Wyoming Valley opposed supporters of the half-share ticket over the election of a state representative.<sup>16</sup>

A growing awareness of political issues at the state and national level slowly superseded the localist outlook that had kept Luzerne County in the Federalist camp. By 1805 John Franklin had retired from public life and could no longer offer his personal magnetism to the Federalist cause. More important, with the end of settler resistance and the final adjustment of Connecticut land claims in 1810, Yankees began to look beyond their mistrust of Pennsylvania's Republican government and recognize their kinship with the ideas and policies of the Republican party. For some time, the Republicans' pro-agrarian platform had attracted poor Yankee settlers. This development was especially pronounced outside of Luzerne County, where the influence of the Federalist Sheshequinites was not so pronounced. Indeed, in 1799 Samuel Preston observed that Wayne County settlers from Federalist-dominated Connecticut "unanimously" turned to the Republicans when they arrived in the backcountry. By 1816 Yankee settlements along the northeast frontier had fallen into line with national voting patterns and supported Republicans.<sup>17</sup>

The ambition of leading Yankee settlers helped to transform northeast Pennsylvania from a Federalist to a Republican stronghold. William Means, Joseph Kinney, Nathaniel Allen, Joseph Kingsbury, and several other leading men came into the Republican fold when they realized that the party had much more to offer rising backcountry entrepreneurs than the more elitist, metropolitan-oriented Federalists. These same men agitated for the creation of Bradford County out of the northern portions of Luzerne and Lycoming and, once the state government established the new jurisdiction in 1812, took control of the

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<sup>16</sup> Bradsby, *History of Bradford County*, 287; John Franklin to John Jenkins, September 16, 1801, *SCP* 11:198; Thomas Cooper to Thomas McKean, November 15, 1802, *Ibid.*, 340.

<sup>17</sup> Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, November 14, 1799, Henry Drinker Papers, Letterbook, 1786-1790, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

county's political apparatus. Henry Welles served as Bradford County's first representative to the state legislature, William Means served as its first treasurer, Nathaniel Allen and Joseph Kinney both took posts as county commissioners, and Joseph Kingsbury accepted an appointment as clerk of the commissioners. Bradford County's leading men overturned Federalist domination and embraced the more egalitarian, localist ethos of the Republican party, and in doing so, they brought their constituents into the political mainstream.<sup>18</sup>

By the second decade of the nineteenth century, partisan politics no longer responded to the ebb and flow of land disputes. Instead, parties began to use conflict between Yankee settlers and Pennsylvania landholders to mobilize voter support. This pattern first emerged in 1817 when inhabitants from Bradford County pushed for the passage of legislation, popularly known as the "Settlers' Bill," that would have guaranteed state-awarded compensation for Connecticut claimants who were ejected from their lands. The battle over this law became a statewide issue during the year's gubernatorial election. Joseph Heister, the Federalist candidate with a longstanding ties to the Landholder's Association, opposed the bill. His Republican opponents showcased his opposition to undercut his standing in northeast Pennsylvania and among backcountry inhabitants throughout the state. Likewise, in 1827 Federalists in Bradford County helped to reopen the land dispute between Elizabeth Mathewson and Elisha Satterlee (who held the contested property under a Pennsylvania deed). The Federalists sided with Mathewson. They did so not to revive the Connecticut claim but to discredit their Republican foes, Pennsylvania landholders Charles and Henry Welles, among the county's Yankee inhabitants.<sup>19</sup>

Personal loyalties, family ties, neighborhood networks, and other face-to-face relationships shaped political allegiance along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier and across

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<sup>18</sup> Bradsby, *History of Bradford County*, 298, 272-279.

<sup>19</sup> Murray, *History of Old Tioga*, 449-451, 459-460.



the early republic. Thus, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries parties in the United States emerged in a political atmosphere that remained tied to local culture. However, the relationship between localism and party formation was a two-way street. Land disputes and interpersonal ties framed partisan politics along the northeast frontier. At the same time, the participation of leading men in political parties linked the region with an emerging set of translocal political issues and institutions. By the 1820s, party affiliation had become an important element of self-definition among prominent Yankee settlers, an element that competed with older, more parochial sources of identity.

Party politics was not the only vehicle backcountry leading men used to establish an identity that took them beyond the bounds of local culture: the startling rise of Freemasonry along the post-revolutionary American frontier also reflected frontier elites' growing familiarity with translocal institutions and long-distance social networks. Between 1790 and 1840, as many as 100,000 men joined the Masons; many of these new members were enterprising men who came from small commercial towns in the United States' rapidly expanding frontier regions.<sup>20</sup>

The rise of Masonry was apparent along Pennsylvania's frontier by the turn of the century. The leading inhabitants of Wilkes-Barre formed a Masonic lodge in 1794. Next, Masons established the Rural Amity Lodge at Athens in 1796. Several members of the Athens lodge had previously belonged to a Masonic lodge that had been formed in 1793 just across the state line in Newtown, New York. Finally, Yankee settlers from around Towanda Creek formed the Union Lodge in 1807. The Rural Amity Lodge had fourteen charter members, including such well-known Yankee agitators as Elisha Satterlee and

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<sup>20</sup> Steven C. Bullock, "A Pure and Sublime System: The Appeal of Post-Revolutionary Freemasonry" *Journal of the Early Republic* 9 (Fall 1989): 366-369; Alan Taylor, *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 210-213; Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1990), 235.

Joseph Kingsbury. Many of these men are familiar characters: most were leading figures in Yankee resistance during the 1780s and 1790s but had abandoned insurgency in the early 1800s. Like the Rural Amity Lodge, several leading Connecticut claimants and former Wild Yankees could be found among Union Lodge's nineteen original members. The most prominent among these was Josiah Grant.<sup>21</sup>

Yankee leading men who had once promoted the Connecticut claim and led Yankee settlers in resistance against Pennsylvania became Freemasons. These men, like many who joined the Masonic order after the Revolution, were ambitious, politically active commercial farmers and entrepreneurs. For example, the most prominent and progressive inhabitants of Athens were members of the Rural Amity Lodge. Indeed, lodge members Elisha Satterlee, John Spalding, John Shepard, Noah Murray, and Clement Paine, promoted the establishment of the Athens Academy--one of the region's first formal public schools--in 1797. They also took a leading role in transforming Athens from a rough-and-tumble frontier settlement into a backcountry commercial center replete with inns, stores, and mills. Athens' chief inhabitants, like prominent Yankee settlers throughout the Pennsylvania backcountry, were a marginal local elite in search of legitimacy, prestige, and power. Freemasonry was one institution that offered them status and opportunity.<sup>22</sup>

Backcountry entrepreneurs eagerly joined the Freemasons because the fraternal order gave them an element of security in an increasingly fluid, competitive society. Mobility, both social and physical, made a translocal organization like the Freemasons attractive to individuals who desired wealth and status but could not obtain them through family and community ties. The Freemasons furnished charitable relief to members who met with

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<sup>21</sup> Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 177; Bradsby, *History of Bradford County*, 369, 307, 371.

<sup>22</sup> Dorothy Ann Lipson, *Freemasonry in Federalist Connecticut* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1977), 8, 77; Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 207-208, 220-223; Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 123.

fiscal setbacks and provided access to an extensive network of social and economic connections. In short, Masonry offered ambitious, mobile entrepreneurs a sense of community. However, the community created by Masons was not bound by family ties, neighborliness, or physical proximity but defined by membership in a secret, select society. The Freemasons did not accept just anyone into their ranks and, although the standards for membership significantly widened after the Revolution, acceptance into a Masonic lodge still carried with it considerable prestige. This elitism appealed to Yankee leading men who wished to gain recognition and acceptance not from their settler neighbors but from well-connected gentlemen outside their communities.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to the economic and social connections, Freemasons also gained access to a source of emotional and spiritual support through rites and ceremonies. Masonic ritual underwent a transformation after the Revolution. Before independence, the order's secret rituals were seen as symbol-laden ceremonies that commemorated an individual's progress through Masonic society. But in the 1790s Masons increasingly perceived their rituals as a mystical, sacred corpus of knowledge. Post-revolutionary Freemasons created elaborate rites and placed great emphasis on executing ceremonies with correct wording and movements, as if they were performing an incantation. For example, an initiate who sought entrance into the Mason's Knights Templar degree had to enter a darkened room where he drank wine from a human skull before completing a series of verbal and physical exercises. Such ritualism, like a belief in magic, gave Masons a sense of control over their world and furnished an emotional outlet for enterprising men who faced an uncertain, competitive world.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 184-186 and Idem., "A Pure and Sublime System," 360.

<sup>24</sup> Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, 235; Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 239-247, 253-268; Idem., "A Pure and Sublime System," 370-371.

Freemasonry provided Yankee leading men with a new source of identity; however, like the relationship between party politics and local culture, Masonry was transformed by its encounter with backcountry localism. In northeast Pennsylvania, Masonry lost some of its exclusiveness and became bound up with popular, local culture. For example, after the Revolution, Freemasonry became increasingly christianized as evangelical ferment swept across the United States. Moreover, a fascination with mysticism and magic was not limited to Masons but was a post-revolutionary social phenomenon that affected people from many different walks of life. Indeed, Masonic ritualism had much in common with popular folk beliefs surrounding magic and the supernatural world.<sup>25</sup>

Party politics and Masonry provided two avenues through which backcountry leading men reworked their relationship to local culture. Whether these individuals took on the personae of Republicans, Federalists, or Freemasons, they all moved away from an identity based exclusively on family, community, and locale and embraced one that transcended parochial boundaries and included a growing class consciousness. Leading men may have played a central role in the transformation of localism, but they were not the sole architects of social and cultural change in the backcountry. Ordinary settlers also took a hand in reshaping local culture.

### **Pulpit Drummers**

Far more than partisan politics or Freemasonry, the rise of evangelical religion shaped the social and cultural landscape of the post-revolutionary American backcountry. Unlike party or Masonic membership, religious activity was not restricted to frontier elites. Instead, ordinary men and women propelled the growth of evangelical Christianity. Nathan

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<sup>25</sup> Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 268 and 168-169. For the similarities between the form and function of Masonic ritual and rural treasure hunting see Alan Taylor, "The Early Republic's Supernatural Economy: Treasure Seeking in the American Northeast, 1780-1830" *American Quarterly* 38 (Spring 1986): 6-34.

Rude was once such individual. Rude, who described himself as a “pulpit drummer and a cushion thumper,” was a Baptist and “Restorationist” preacher who migrated from New England to Wayne County. Once settled on the Pennsylvania frontier, he joined his Yankee counterparts in the religious awakenings that marked America’s hinterlands at the turn of the century.<sup>26</sup>

Like the backcountry leading men who entered into party politics or became Freemasons, common settlers who turned to evangelical Christianity helped to transform localism. Yankees turned from resistance to religion as a source of community cohesion and, in so doing, recast local culture in the backcountry. In particular, the rise of Methodism had a great impact on Yankee localism. In many ways, Methodism served the same function as political parties and Masonry: it introduced translocal institutions to the backcountry, provided people with a new source of identity, and extended traditional concepts of community.

Evangelical Christianity swept through the United States in the decades following the Revolution, and religious fervor was particularly pronounced among frontier settlers. Baptists, Free Will Baptists, Universalists, Unitarians, Methodists, and other evangelical denominations gained in power and numbers at the expense of older, more traditional denominations such as the Congregational, Anglican, and Presbyterian churches. For example, the Methodist Episcopal Church experienced an unprecedented surge of growth, expanding from about a thousand members in 1770 to over a quarter of a million just fifty years later. Moreover, Methodism spread from its strongholds south of the Mason-Dixon

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<sup>26</sup> Goodrich, *History of Wayne County*, 197-198. For the impact of evangelical religion on post-Revolutionary America see “Toward the Antebellum Spiritual Hothouse,” in Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, chapter 8; and Nathan O. Hatch, “The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People” *Journal of American History* 67 (December 1980): 545-567.

Line to Pennsylvania, New York, and New England. America's other evangelical denominations made similar but not so spectacular gains.<sup>27</sup>

Baptists had been present along the northeast frontier since before the Revolution and had successfully competed with Congregationalists and Presbyterians in the Wyoming Valley. However, it was only in the late 1780s that the Methodist Episcopal Church entered the region. Anning Owen, an early Yankee settler, survivor of the Battle of Wyoming, and blacksmith, returned to the Wyoming Valley after having fled to Connecticut during the Revolution. While in New England, Owen had converted to Methodism and become a lay preacher. In 1788 he formed a Methodist "class" at Ross Hill in the Wyoming Valley. Soon, Methodists extended their influence beyond the valley and established classes across the northeast frontier. In 1792 Methodist groups along the Pennsylvania-New York state line began to receive regular visits from itinerant preachers. Soon, these classes came to constitute part of a preaching tour known as the Tioga Circuit. This district included Yankee settlements that stood at the center of Wild Yankee resistance in the 1790s and early 1800s. Its growing membership reflected the increasing influence of Methodism along the frontier: the Tioga Circuit contained 71 members in 1792, 202 in 1800, and 393 by 1810.<sup>28</sup>

Evangelical Christianity spread rapidly through the backcountry because it provided settlers with a source of order, meaning, and self-empowerment in an unstable, rapidly-changing world. One traveler who journeyed through Pennsylvania's northeast

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<sup>27</sup> John Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998), 3-6; Michael George Nickerson, "Sermons, Systems, and Strategies: The Geographic Strategies of the Methodist Episcopal Church in its Expansion into New York State, 1788-1810" (Ph.D. diss., Syracuse Univ, 1988), 18, 48-49; Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men*, 131-142.

<sup>28</sup> Amasa F. Chaffee, *History of the Wyoming Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1904), 3-4, 12-14, 36-37; *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the Years 1773-1828* (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1840), 46-47, 92-94, 183-88.

frontier noted the important role that popular religion played in the lives of poor backcountry inhabitants. He observed that a Yankee family with whom he lodged attended religious services not once but twice on Sundays. They did not attend a church or hear the sermon of an ordained minister but went to a neighboring cabin to attend services led by a local lay preacher. The Methodist Episcopal Church was particularly adept at providing its adherents with a sense of community and fellowship through frequent class meetings, quarterly meetings, and "love feasts." Such religious gatherings engendered communal bonds that were highly valued by settlers who lived in backcountry regions marked by high rates of population turnover. Like the Baptists, the Methodists also promoted strict morals and temperance. Again, settlers who experienced the social disorder and dislocation of frontier migration embraced church-imposed discipline and used it to supplement family- and community-enforced norms of behavior.<sup>29</sup>

Historians have portrayed evangelical religion as a force that promoted popular dissent and challenges to elite authority. There is much truth in this argument, but the impact of evangelical religion varied from region to region and denomination to denomination. For instance, Baptist leaders in Massachusetts, instead of supporting Shays' Rebellion, avoided any association with agrarian unrest in the state. In contrast, Free Will Baptists and other evangelical sects in Maine played a significant role in promoting settler insurgency; indeed, many of the region's spiritual leaders were also prominent White Indians.<sup>30</sup> Popular

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<sup>29</sup> Journal Entry, October 5, 1806, Journal of Samuel Fothergill, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men*, 140-42; Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, 84-85, 98; Nickerson, "Sermons, Systems, and Strategies," 48-49.

<sup>30</sup> William G. McLoughlin, *New England Dissent, 1630-1883*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1971), 2:777; John L. Brook, "A Deacon's Orthodoxy: Religion, Class, and the Moral Economy of Shay's Rebellion" in Robert A. Gross, ed., *In Debt to Shays: The Bicentennial of an Agrarian Rebellion* (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1993), 207, 221; Alan Taylor, "Nathan Barlow's Journey: Mysticism and Popular Protest on the Northeastern Frontier" in Charles E. Clark, James S. Leamon, and Karen Bowden, ed., *Maine in the Early Republic* (Hanover, NH: Univ. Press of New England, 1988), 100-117.

Christianity did motivate social unrest, yet it also served to increase social discipline and diffuse discontent by replacing despair with a religiously-inspired optimism; such was the case along Pennsylvania's northeast frontier.

The Baptist, Methodist, and Universalist churches held the most sway among the Yankee inhabitants of northeast Pennsylvania. Each denomination had its theological differences and each formed a distinct relationship with the region's social and cultural landscape. The Baptist Church was the first evangelical denomination to gain a significant following among Yankee settlers. Although Baptists had been active in the Wyoming Valley since the Revolution, it was only in the 1790s that they formed congregations in Yankee settlements along the Pennsylvania-New York border. In 1791 Baptists between Athens and Towanda formed a church under the Reverend Moses Park; Thomas Smiley helped to establish another Baptist congregation at Wyalusing several years later. By 1799 Sugar Creek Baptists, led by Moses Calkins, had also formed themselves into a church. After the turn of the century, several other Baptist churches sprang up along the frontier.<sup>31</sup>

In many ways the Baptist church was simply a purified version of the Congregationalist Church. On the one hand, Baptists retained Congregationalism's Calvinist theology as well as its decentralized, congregation-oriented structure. On the other hand, they rejected much of the elitism and spiritual lethargy that had come to characterize the Congregational faith. What most clearly distinguished Baptists from Congregationalists was their advocacy of religious tolerance and their desire to separate church from state. Both of these features were forged during the Baptists' long struggle against the "standing order"--New England's state-sponsored Congregational Church. By the turn of the century, Baptists had won their fight for recognition and their religious revolution had

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<sup>31</sup> Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 127-132; Nickerson, "Sermons, Systems, and Strategies," 139.



become largely institutionalized. Moreover, the denomination's leadership became increasingly conservative on contemporary political and social issues. Indeed, the Baptist church was not wholly comfortable with post-revolutionary America's more commercial, individualistic society. Baptists became divided between its support of an evangelical Calvinism born of the first Great Awakening and a more liberal Arminian theology that came into favor in the nineteenth century. In the end, the Baptist Church stuck with the former and decided that its main concern lay in moral, not political or social, reform. Thus, the Baptist Church continued to provide meaning and order for backcountry settlers. But as the denomination became more institutionalized and conservative, it lost its ability to inspire dissent or motivate social change. By the 1800s the church lost the capacity to promote resistance among disaffected Yankee settlers and, equally important, lacked a religious message that appealed to ambitious leading men who pursued commercial opportunity and individual achievement.<sup>32</sup>

The Universalists presented Yankee settlers with a clear alternative to the Baptist Church: they were thoroughly Arminian and socially and politically progressive, and they avoided the Baptists' fire-and-brimstone rhetoric. Universalism's spiritual optimism and its faith in reason appealed to entrepreneurial backcountry elites. Athens and Ulster, among whose inhabitants were some of the wealthiest, most development-minded Connecticut claimants, became the center of Universalism in northeast Pennsylvania. A minister who came to preach in Athens in 1811 declared that the town was "Satan's seat" after observing that it was a home to "Universalists and infidels." The Reverend Noah Murray, a Freemason and a former member of the Susquehannah Company, turned his back on the Baptist Church, converted to Universalism, and became one of the denomination's leading proponents. This profile of Universalist membership held true throughout the northeast frontier. Many Universalists were politically active, Freemasons, and prominent

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<sup>32</sup> McLoughlin, *New England Dissent*, 2:750-771.

community leaders who took an interest in land speculation and other commercial ventures. Joseph Kinney was just such an individual: he was a Universalist, a Mason, a one-time proprietor of the Susquehannah Company, and (later on) a land agent and surveyor for Pennsylvania. Joseph Kingsbury also joined the denomination. Like Kinney, he found a theology that complemented his own optimism and personal ambition. At the same time, Universalism had less appeal to poor Yankee farmers who clung to a way of life shaped by subsistence agriculture and folk beliefs.<sup>33</sup>

Methodist doctrine contained elements found in Baptist and Universalist theology. Like the Universalists, Methodists were anti-Calvinistic Arminians who promoted a democratic, progressive ethos. Also like the Universalists, many Methodists--especially itinerant preachers--could be found among the ranks of America's Freemasons. However, Methodists separated themselves from Universalists by turning away from the latter's theological liberalism. In particular, the Methodist Church supported the concept of Hell and eternal damnation (something the Universalists rejected.) More important, Methodism stressed an emotional, almost mystical, attitude toward religion that contrasted sharply with Universalism's sanctification of reason. Methodists also came into fierce competition with the Baptist Church and, by 1800, challenged the Baptist's hold on evangelical America. Methodism's stress on religious experience over religious doctrine offered a clear alternative to the stiff Calvinism of the Baptist church. In addition, Methodism's free-will theology encouraged optimism and hope over the Baptists' Calvinistic resignation. However, like the Baptists, Methodists stressed the importance of personal morality.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> McLoughlin, *New England Dissent*, 2:718; George Claude Baker, Jr. *An Introduction to the History of Early New England Methodism, 1789-1839* (New York: AMS Press, 1969; Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1914), 38-39; Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 127, 168-169, 363; Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 176; Murray, *History of Old Tioga*, 324-325, 556-557.

<sup>34</sup> Baker, *History of Early New England Methodism*, 38, 48; Russell E. Richey, *Early*

Methodism's spiritual optimism, its free-will theology, and its emphasis on personal discipline appealed to poor Yankee settlers and ambitious leading men alike. Both David Woodbridge, the leading Connecticut claimant in Wayne County, and Andrew McKean, an ordinary Yankee settler along Sugar Creek, could both be found among Methodist ranks. Job Irish was another entrepreneurial Yankee who found meaning in Methodism; indeed, he took time away from his profession as a lawyer to become a Methodist lay preacher. Methodism appealed most strongly not to the destitute and the hopeless but to those determined to improve their lot on earth.<sup>35</sup>

A significant feature of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the one that would have a great impact on backcountry localism, was its strong, nation-wide denominational organization. In 1784 American Methodists broke away from their British counterparts and formed themselves into a national church. At the grass-roots level, Methodists organized themselves into class meetings. Several classes joined together to form a preaching circuit, and all the classes from a circuit gathered together four times a year at quarterly meetings. A collection of circuits constituted a district, and two or more districts constituted a regional conference. These conferences met at an annual gathering of the Methodist Episcopal Church. No other church in the nation possessed an denominational organization as elaborate or as successful in generating growth. Moreover, unlike other churches whose activities were limited to specific regions, the Methodist Episcopal

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*American Methodists* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1991), 88-89; Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 178; McLoughlin, *New England Dissent*, 2:723-725.

<sup>35</sup> Stewart Pearce, *Annals of Luzerne County* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1866), 160-161; Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 148; Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, 11-12, 17; Clement F. Heverly, *Pioneer and Patriot Families of Bradford County, Pennsylvania*, 2 vols. (Towanda, PA: Bradford Star Print, 1913), 2:222.

Church developed specific strategies for extending itself into every corner of the United States. At the heart of this program of expansion were the church's itinerant preachers.<sup>36</sup>

The Methodist Episcopal Church relied on poorly paid, highly motivated itinerant preachers to carry its message to the very fringes of American settlement. This cadre of traveling clergymen contributed to Methodist success in several respects. First, the low pay they received and the long distances they traveled allowed Methodism to expand cheaply and effectively. Moreover, low-paid itinerants enabled backwoods communities that could not afford a settled minister to receive religious instruction. All in all, this system of itinerant preachers allowed the Methodists to establish a foothold in frontier settlements before other denominations had a chance to establish themselves and, more important, it assured that Methodist clergymen would receive a warm welcome from parsimonious settlers. Most other denominations lacked this flexibility. The Congregational Church's ability to expand was limited by its dependence on a highly educated, settled (and well paid) ministry that most frontier communities could not, or would not, support. Likewise, the Baptists' reliance on unpaid local preachers limited the denomination's ability to grow. The Baptists' lay ministry was better suited to America's hinterlands than the Congregational clergy, but it lacked mobility and the administrative organization to transform local religious fervor into a deliberate program of expansion.<sup>37</sup>

Itinerant preachers embodied the Methodist Church's national organization: they were outsiders who gained entrance into local communities through their ability to provide ordinary people, even the poorest backcountry settlers, with spiritual guidance. William Colbert was one Methodist itinerant who traversed Pennsylvania's northeast frontier while serving the Tioga Circuit. His journal contains clear evidence of the important role itinerants played in the spiritual lives of Yankee settlers, of the difficulties they

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<sup>36</sup> Baker, *History of Early New England Methodism*, 5; Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, 25; Richey, *Early American Methodists*, 34, 44-50.

<sup>37</sup> Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, 27, 33, 60.

encountered in the backcountry, and of the cultural distance that often separated them from their parishioners. On April 20, 1797, Colbert noted that “a glorious change” had taken place in Amos Park’s family--the household, once “dead and Calvinistic,” had come “alive” and converted to Methodism. However, such spiritual victories were accompanied by days and weeks of unrewarding toil, discomfort, and loneliness among a people far different from the educated, Maryland-born Colbert. For example, just weeks after the conversion of the Park family, Colbert complained of having a “long and tiresome ride,” only to spend his evening at a “disagreeable” backcountry tavern with “three or four vile wretches.” He concluded the entry by noting that “as the company of such abominable beings is so disagreeable here on earth, what care ought to be taken to escape hell, where they are much worse.”<sup>38</sup>

The Methodists’ circuit preachers were the key element of a denominational structure that combined administrative centralization with a high degree of local autonomy. The itinerant system did not represent the imposition of a translocal religious institution over local religious sentiment. The Methodist Church left ample opportunity for local initiative; in fact, the denomination depended upon it. Backcountry settlements might receive only two visits from a circuit preacher every month. For instance, an itinerant preacher serving the Tioga Circuit around the turn of the century noted that he had to attend to thirty classes along a four-hundred-mile route. Such long distances over rough terrain assured that his calls on local Methodist societies were intermittent at best. In between these visits, maintaining Methodist religious life fell to local exhorters and lay preachers.<sup>39</sup>

The Methodist Church developed a strong national denominational organization, but the spiritual life of backcountry Methodists remained ensconced in face-to-face relationships. Methodism appealed to Yankee settlers because it successfully blended translocal

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<sup>38</sup> Peck, *Early Methodism*, 124-125.

<sup>39</sup> Nickerson, “Sermons, Systems, and Strategies,” 338; Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, 33, 80.

authority with local autonomy. For instance, Methodism first emerged along Sugar Creek not through the labors of itinerant preachers but the spiritual zeal of its Yankee inhabitants. The creek's settlers held a prayer meeting the day after they arrived at their new frontier home. This gathering marked the beginning of a local religious upsurge. The revival, which took place without the supervision or encouragement of an ordained minister, led to the formation of Sugar Creek's first Methodist class meeting.<sup>40</sup>

The presence of so many women in the ranks of the region's early Methodists shows that the denomination, though national in scale, remained intertwined with household and neighborhood life. In post-revolutionary America, women were increasingly seen as the caretakers of the home and the moral guardians of the family. This developing sphere of feminine activities came to include religious life. The involvement of women in the spread of evangelical Christianity was evident along Sugar Creek. Among the revivalists who formed the settlement's Methodist class meeting were Jane McKean, Mary Dobbins, and the wives of other Sugar Creek settlers. Several women had also been among the charter members of the region's first Methodist society under Anning Owen. Early American women and the Methodist Episcopal Church occupied a common social sphere--the intimate face-to-face relationships that structured daily life.<sup>41</sup>

By 1796, Sugar Creek's Methodist class meeting had become an important facet of local community life and enjoyed the patronage of some of the settlement's leading inhabitants. After the turn of the century, Stephen Ballard's home along the creek became the site of several of the Tioga Circuit's quarterly meetings. William Colbert attended these gatherings and, though he found Sugar Creek a "gloomy-looking place," described them as "very good." These quarterly meetings served both an administrative and social function. They provided a forum in which Methodists could conduct denominational

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<sup>40</sup> Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 289-290, 153-154.

<sup>41</sup> Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 289-290; Peck, *Early Methodism*, 32; Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, 151, 157-159.

business and enforce church discipline. These meetings also brought Methodists together for several days of worship, singing, and prayer, all of which contributed to a sense of fellowship and community. Thus, quarterly meetings reflected the very essence of early American Methodism: the successful marriage of administrative efficiency and translocal authority with community and local autonomy.<sup>42</sup>

Of course, tensions existed between backcountry localism the Methodist Church's translocal structure. The experiences of the itinerant preachers who traveled the Tioga Circuit highlight this friction. On several occasions, Methodist ministers who brought the word of God to Yankee settlers met with hostility rather than hospitality. On one occasion, William Colbert was preaching in the home of a settler by the name of Burney when a man, whom Colbert described as a "poor unhappy son of Belial," entered the cabin, interrupted the service, and verbally abused him. After this disturbing encounter, Colbert crossed the Susquehanna and preached at "Old Mr. Cole's" house. He attempted to "regulate" a class meeting that met there but "found them very refractory." The settlers' rebellious spirit may have been fueled by Mr. Cole's daughter, Mary. Colbert described her as a "great enthusiast" and noted that her husband was the man who had given him trouble at Burney's. William Colbert was not the only Methodist preacher to have difficulties with Yankee settlers. Michael Wilson served the Tioga circuit in 1797 and met with repeated disappointments. Despondent over his lack of success, Wilson wrote: "my labor is not much blest in this place, unless it is blest with turning out disorderly persons."<sup>43</sup>

Although it encountered some resistance from settlers, Methodism gained adherents because it offered emotional and spiritual support to backcountry inhabitants experiencing a disorienting series of social and economic changes. The Revolution, frontier expansion,

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<sup>42</sup> Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 149; Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, 89, 115; Nickerson, "Sermons, Systems, and Strategies," 270, 273.

<sup>43</sup> Peck, *Early Methodism*, 47; Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, 63.

and the emergence of a commercial social order forced many Americans to search for new ways to understand their changing world; evangelical religion was one path people followed to take control of their lives. Methodism emphasized emotion and experience rather than doctrine; it encouraged people to take an active role in their spiritual lives and taught them that their salvation could be obtained through godly behavior. Moreover, early Methodism (like post-revolutionary Freemasonry) embraced popular beliefs in magic and the supernatural. For example, while preaching at Newtown, New York, William Colbert met with members of a Methodist class meeting who spoke of unearthly groans, ghostly apparitions, and other “strange things.” On another occasion, he met a young Methodist woman who swore she had a prophetic dream in which a man who was recently killed “came to her to inform her that there is a hell.”<sup>44</sup>

Like its stress on religious experience, the mystical side of Methodism appealed to ordinary people who wanted a theology that legitimated their beliefs and enabled them to circumvent the authority of orthodox religion. This marriage of popular religion and a belief in the supernatural proved to be a powerful combination that would mark backcountry spirituality well into the nineteenth century. Indeed, the Mormons, a religious sect steeped in mysticism and magic, arose from America’s “Yankee” frontiers of Vermont and upstate New York. In fact, Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, dwelt briefly on the banks of Tunkhannock Creek. When he went west in search of religious freedom in 1837, thirteen families from the creek followed him.<sup>45</sup>

There was another facet of Methodism far different from religious emotionalism--its focus on personal discipline. Early Methodism possessed a dual identity: on the one hand, the denomination flirted with mysticism and the supernatural world; on the other, it

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<sup>44</sup> Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, 106-111; Baker, *History of Early New England Methodism*, 25-32; Peck, *Early Methodism*, 50-51;

<sup>45</sup> Gordon S. Wood, “Evangelical America and Early Mormonism,” *New York History* 61 (October 1980): 359-386; Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, 236; Pearce, *Annals of Luzerne*, 314.



promoted a code of behavior that would strike the modern observer as conspicuously middle class. The Methodist Church stressed the importance of abstinence, hygiene, and righteous behavior. Reverend William Colbert repeatedly highlighted his support of these values through his scathing rebukes of backcountry inhabitants who failed to live by them. One of his journal's recurring themes is the lack of hygiene he found in backcountry settlements. In one entry, Colbert wrote that he visited part of his flock on the Tioga Circuit but did not enjoy his stay because the people were "shamefully dirty." In another, he related that he rode far into the night in search of an inn rather than lodge "in the filth" of a settler's cabin. Through their battle against sin, grime, and vice, Colbert and other Methodists promoted a belief in social improvement and progress. Again, this is why the denomination appealed to local leading men such as Stephen Ballard and more development-minded backcountry entrepreneurs such as Job Irish and Joseph Kinney.<sup>46</sup>

Methodism formed part of the current of social change that swept the post-revolutionary American backcountry. The denomination managed to sustain its vitality on a local level while it simultaneously developed a national administrative structure. Thus, Methodism not only made its way into individual backcountry settlements, but served to bring them together in a translocal religious community. Methodism embraced the emotionalism and mysticism that characterized popular Christianity across rural America. At the same time, the denomination used its commitment to religious enthusiasm to import values of personal discipline and bourgeois morality to backcountry inhabitants.

Joseph Kingsbury exemplified many of the attitudes and values that transformed backcountry localism. Kingsbury, a leading Wild Yankee before the turn of the century, turned his back on violence and resistance after 1800. He even went so far as to aid Pennsylvania in extending the provisions of the Compromise Act over the towns of Ulster

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<sup>46</sup> Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm*, 101-102; Peck, *Early Methodism*, 44-45, 129.

and Bedford in 1810. What accounts for this shift in attitude and behavior? Joseph Kingsbury--a Freemason, a Universalist, and one of the northeast frontier's first party politicians--was one of a number of Yankee settlers who renegotiated their relationship to local culture. Moreover, he was one of many backcountry inhabitants who recast their identity in the nineteenth century by turning away from the parochialism that had characterized the agrarian frontier in the eighteenth century.

Kingsbury and like-minded leading Yankees, embraced a liberal, progressive, more worldly ideology that separated them from the intense localism of the revolutionary age. The rise of partisan politics, Freemasonry, and Methodism was a sign of this emerging world view. First as a Federalist "Sheshequinite" and later as a leading Republican of Bradford County, Kingsbury brought party politics to the region and participated in a process whereby state and national party organizations, rather than local land disputes, came to determine voter allegiance. Kingsbury became a Freemason because membership in the fraternal order aided him in his pursuit of power and status. Finally, like many other backcountry settlers, Kingsbury found meaning, empowerment, and a new source of identity in evangelical Christianity. In particular, he embraced Universalism's optimism and its faith in reason.

Methodism, political parties, and Freemasonry bridged the gap between local life and an awareness of events and institutions beyond the northeast frontier. Moreover, Methodism and Masonry promoted values of progress and self-discipline that contributed to social and cultural stratification in the region. Ultimately, these movements contributed to the emergence of a new social landscape, in which class would increasingly compete with localism as the foundation of identity and social interaction.

EPILOGUE  
THE FATE OF BACKCOUNTRY LOCALISM

*You may turn us out by the Sheriff as often as you please,  
and the settlement will put us in again, and so we will carry  
it on for nine hundred and ninety-nine years. If the laws  
will not do us justice, our muskets shall.*<sup>1</sup>

The last battle in northeast Pennsylvania's struggle for property and power was fought not between Connecticut and Pennsylvania claimants but between two prominent Yankee families. In 1807 Elizabeth Mathewson commenced a law suit to recover three town lots in Athens that her husband had leased to her brother, Elisha Satterlee. Mathewson, who held the land under a Connecticut title, took action after her brother purchased a Pennsylvania deed to the property in an attempt to secure it for himself. Thus two Yankees--one with a Pennsylvania deed and the other with a Connecticut claim--came to court to settle their differences. Elisha Satterlee won the case, but this did not end the dispute.

In 1813 Elizabeth took action to regain her property from Elisha. She reopened the dispute when she discovered that the Pennsylvania deed held by her brother was faulty. Mathewson and Satterlee waged an on-again, off-again legal battle over the next fourteen years. At one point, local Federalists reignited the conflict and promoted Elizabeth Mathewson's land claims in hopes of reawakening old prejudices against Pennsylvania's Republican administration. Ultimately, the case ended up before the Pennsylvania Supreme

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<sup>1</sup> Deposition of Casper Singer, January 26, 1797, Robert J. Taylor, ed., *The Susquehannah Company Papers*, 11 vols. (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1971), 10:401.

Court. In 1827 the court upheld the Satterlee family's possession of the disputed land but awarded Elizabeth Mathewson \$10,000 to compensate her for her losses.<sup>2</sup>

The Mathewson-Satterlee controversy reflected how Yankee unity and the localist world view it rested upon had come undone. During the eighteenth century, the Mathewson and Satterlee households had been at the center of Yankee resistance. They had directed their ire at those they considered outsiders and settled their battles through violence, intimidation, guile. By the first decades of the nineteenth century, this intense clannishness had been overwhelmed by a social order in which Yankee settlers were increasingly separated by lines of class and in which their leading men were more apt to cooperate with Pennsylvania than resist its authority. Indeed, the land dispute between Elizabeth Mathewson and Elisha Satterlee was not settled in the backcountry but in Pennsylvania's highest court; the contestants did not turn to their neighbors for vindication but submitted to a decision made in a far-off courtroom.

John Franklin died on March 1, 1831 at the age of eighty-two. With his passing, and the passing of his generation, backcountry localism faded along the northeast frontier. Franklin never turned his back on the values and vision that had brought New Englanders to Pennsylvania in the mid-eighteenth century: a commitment to community and the pursuit of agrarian independence. At the time of his death, Franklin possessed a 580-acre farm, a sawmill, a horse, some livestock, and a house. His personal property was only worth \$316.20. His single most valuable possession was a clock valued at \$15. Franklin was well off but he was no commercially-oriented backcountry entrepreneur, nor did he get caught up in the turn-of-the-century social movements that swept the backcountry. He never became a Freemason and, instead of joining the Universalists or Methodists, he

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<sup>2</sup> David Craft, *History of Bradford County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co., 1878), 277-278; Louise Welles Murray, *A History of Old Tioga Point and Early Athens* (Wilkes-Barre: Reader Press, 1907), 422-424, 459, 474.

stayed true to his New Light Congregational roots. He died as he had lived: a yeoman farmer committed to the rights of backcountry settlers.<sup>3</sup>

Franklin symbolized the northeast frontier's localist past; in fact, the eight decades of his life spanned the emergence and decline of revolutionary backcountry localism. Between the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth century, localism served as a foundation for social relationships, a source of identity, and a cognitive framework in the backcountry. Agrarian life had always focused on face-to-face relationships, but two events--frontier expansion and the Revolution--transformed this parochialism into a powerful social and cultural force. An unprecedented number of Americans migrated to the frontier in the wake of the Seven Years' War and the Revolution. In doing so, they often outpaced formal authority. Frontier yeomen developed an outlook informed by their familiarity with small-scale social networks and their increased geographical and institutional isolation from metropolitan areas. The Revolution also had an impact on the evolution of backcountry localism: it unraveled the fabric of imperial power and further fragmented authority in the backcountry. The social and political upheaval that attended America's move toward independence provided frontier inhabitants with an opportunity to achieve their own autonomy from state governments and eastern elites. In addition, the radical republican ideology that emerged with the Revolution served to legitimate these backwoods struggles for local independence.

The unrest and rebellion that marked the post-revolutionary frontier represents the most striking manifestation of localism's cultural potency. Backcountry conflicts often revolved around disputes concerning land and authority; on a deeper level, however, a language of localism pervaded these struggles. Battles over territorial and jurisdictional rights often involved state and federal governments, but they also existed on a face-to-face level and

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<sup>3</sup> James E. Brady, "Wyoming: A Study of John Franklin and the Connecticut Settlement into Pennsylvania" (Ph.D. diss., Syracuse Univ., 1973), 309-312.

were waged by backcountry settlers who sought to defend their property and independence. Settlers themselves provide insights into their localist world-view by describing conflicts over land and power in terms of insiders versus outsiders, Yankees versus Pennamites, settlers versus speculators, even when such characterizations obscured more complex realities. Moreover, agrarian independence--an ideal that motivated and gave meaning to agrarian resistance--was in many ways a localist vision in which independent yeomen households joined together to form an egalitarian community free from dependency on outsiders.

In the end, localism lost the monopoly it held on identity formation and social relationships in the backcountry. The very forces that had given it such strength brought about its decline. By the nineteenth century, frontier expansion had reached unprecedented levels as land-hungry Americans overran the Atlantic seaboard and spilled over into the Trans-Appalachian west. The rate and extent of expansion was not the only difference between frontier settlement before and after the Revolution: by the turn of the century, backcountry development had become highly commercialized. The frontier had always been linked to the Atlantic world economy; but , by the nineteenth century, land developers and government officials increasingly held the initiative over settlers and Indians in determining what shape the American backcountry would take. The growing commercialization of settlement also worked to undermine localism by promoting the development of class divisions along the frontier.

Like frontier expansion, America's revolutionary legacy contributed to the demise of backcountry localism. By the turn of the century, the United States had institutionalized the revolutionary movement that had given it birth. Most notably, the new federal constitution gave the United States a strong central government. This new political order not only put limits on the sovereignty of states but undercut a belief that had been legitimated by the Revolution: that local communities had the right to declare their autonomy and independence from a government if they felt that it did not protect and

serve their interests. In the long run, the social impact of the Revolution also undermined backcountry localism. Yes, the Revolution inspired Americans to challenge authority, refashion their spiritual lives, and uphold popular sovereignty; it also unleashed a more fluid, competitive social order. By the nineteenth century, Americans lived in a diverse, highly mobile (socially as well as geographically) society where translocal institutions and voluntary associations increasingly replaced community as a nexus of social interaction and where identity became more a matter of individual choice than community dictate. Post-revolutionary society also became a market-driven society in which class spread into social relationships that had been previously structured by kin, community, and locale.

Backcountry localism reached its zenith around 1780 and then declined as the social, economic, and political conditions that had given it strength in the eighteenth century were reconfigured in the nineteenth. However, localism did not disappear: it only changed and, at times, even took on its revolutionary-era potency. As America's frontier zone moved west, so did the conditions that encouraged intense localism. In isolated backcountry regions where social and economic dislocation was keenly felt, farmers readily evoked agrarian America's localist past. For instance, in the 1830s and 1840s, settlers in western New York's Holland Purchase (many of whom had migrated there from New England and northeast Pennsylvania) styled themselves "nullifiers" and fought their landlords for property.<sup>4</sup> Post-Civil War Appalachia was another place where localism and conflict came together. In the Tug River Valley along the West Virginia-Kentucky border, Appalachian mountaineers became embroiled in a dispute over land and authority following the war. The unrest--popularly known as the Hatfield-McCoy feud--was inextricably intertwined with the face-to-face relationships of kin and community. However, in the 1880s the feud developed into a fight between insiders (led by the Hatfields) and outsiders. Like northeast

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<sup>4</sup> Charles E. Brooks, *Frontier Settlement and Market Revolution: The Holland Land Purchase* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1996), 203, 211-212, 224-225.

Pennsylvania's Yankee settlers, the inhabitants of the Tug River Valley sought to protect their local autonomy against outsiders. On this occasion the invaders were not land speculators but coal companies, railroads, and industrial boosters.<sup>5</sup>

The legacy of backcountry localism also survives into the present. Indeed, rural America has recently witnessed the emergence of anti-government extremists and "patriot" militias who seek to defend themselves from what they perceive to be the evil designs of the federal government, the United Nations, and other global institutions. Though modern-day insurgents have traded muskets for assault rifles and tar and feathers for bombs, their objectives and outlook remain much the same as those held by revolutionary America's backcountry rebels. However, one significant feature separates the two and highlights the gap that separates the present from the past. Wild Yankees and White Indians fought for a vision of independence that was central to early America's social fabric. In contrast, today's agrarian extremists are just that, individuals who are waging a campaign of violence to undermine the very foundations of American society.

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<sup>5</sup> The interpretation of the Hatfield-McCoy feud is articulated in Altina L. Waller, *Feud: Hatfields, McCoys, and Social Change in Appalachia, 1860-1900* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1988).



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